

# **EXPLORING DESTINATION IMAGERY: A HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT ON MALAYSIAN DESTINATION IMAGE FROM A BRITISH PERSPECTIVE**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Strathclyde.**

**(Discipline: Tourism Studies)**

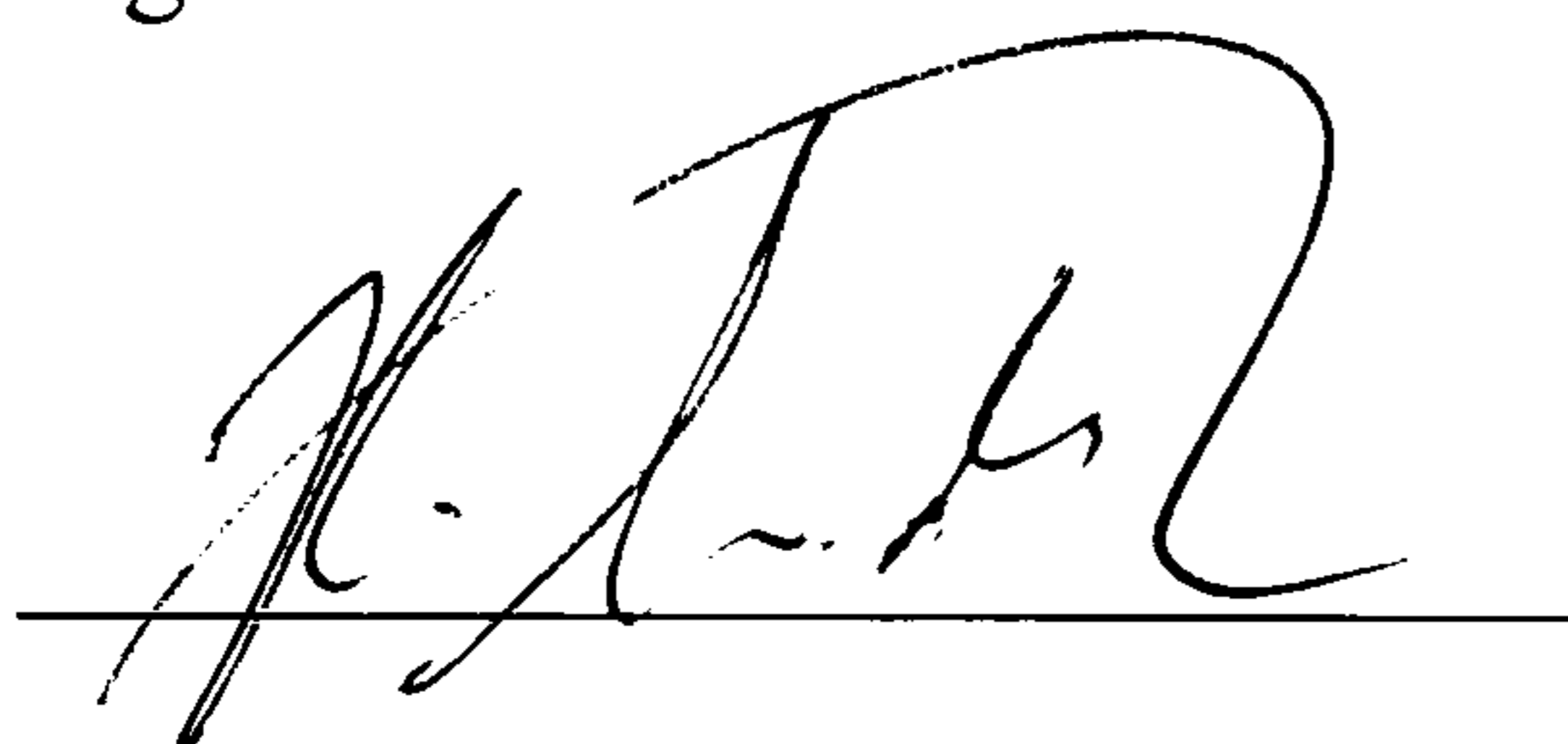
**2004**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, this dissertation is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at the University of Strathclyde or other institutions.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. R. Ramachandran', is written over a horizontal line.

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It is hereby certified that I have read this dissertation entitled “**EXPLORING DESTINATION IMAGERY: A HOLISTIC ASSESSMENT ON MALAYSIAN DESTINATION IMAGE FROM A BRITISH PERSPECTIVE**” by Sridar Ramachandran and in my opinion it is satisfactory in terms of scope, quality and presentation as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy.

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## **DEDICATIONS**

To Mom, Dad, Shobhna & Sharvani

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to understand the meaning and measurement of destination imagery from a holistic angle. Three objectives outlined to achieve this aim includes: 1) to explore the meaning and measurement of tourism destination image, 2) to formulate a holistic approach to study tourism destination image and 3) to assess Malaysian destination image from a British perspective. Based upon feasibility, the British market was chosen to be the case study. However, the complexity of destination imagery derived from literature review requiring inter-dimensional relationship to address destination imagery in a holistic manner, needed further probing of methodological aspects both at philosophical and technical levels as a requisite prior to embarking on the empirical study. The findings in the form of 9 propositions of the initial exploratory study coupled with the inter-dimensional conceptual framework resulted in providing the operational framework of systems thinking as the catalyst for the execution purpose of this study. However, the mismatch of the underpinning set of beliefs to put the operational framework into execution was addressed through philosophical debates that resulted in the formation of 'Synergistic Holism' as a way of research giving priority to the search of truth over rules. Drawing from this philosophical understanding, the inter-dimensional aspects of imagery were made possible to be tested empirically. The roles of tourist, travel advisers, industry players and media materials were assessed using descriptive statistics, in-depth interviews and semiotic analyses respectively. The findings include favourable, unfavourable and ambivalent images of Malaysia from a British perspective. Consequently, 6Is best practices namely *Involvement*, *Innovation*, *Infusion*, *Interpretation*, *Intimacy* and *Ingenuity* are formulated for future policy implications. The knowledge contributions from both theoretical and practical angles are discussed. The finale presents a self-reflection of the journey in completing this thesis and hindsight on future research direction.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This thesis is designed in a way that every chapter has its introduction, body and deduction. Therefore, this background chapter actually speaks of the inspiration behind the research and how this inspiration was executed. Drawing from the inspiration, this chapter moves on to discuss the case components namely Malaysia as the destination and the UK as the market segment. An overview of the importance of the imagery study that was derived from the initial proposal is also discussed, as this had been the catalyst to embark on this thesis. Pulling together the components of this study; the aims, objectives, focus and scope of this thesis are sketched consequently as the guiding principles to the journey of this dissertation.

### **1.2. Inspiration, justification and an overview of imagery**

Why do people study destination image? How important is destination image to both tourism academia and industry? The study of tourism is comparatively new to other established industries like manufacturing and agriculture. Nevertheless, it can't be denied that studies in destination image have been carried out for the past three decades. The study of destination image seems 'evergreen'. One of the many reasons

may be due to destination image's dynamism. Image of a destination unlike a university's brand like Oxford or Harvard, evolves quite often. Although the evolution of image may be slower in a developed nation but quicker evolution is true especially in the case of a developing nation like Malaysia where tourism image to some extent is determined by the evolving economic nature of the country. A classic case of such situation is the branding of Malaysia as a tourist destination. Malaysia being a fast developing nation since its independence four decades ago is going through changes on its reputation internationally. These include Malaysia's political, economical, social and technological changes. On the political front, the pre-independence Malaysia experienced colonisation by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British and for a short spell the Japanese. During this era, the colonialists had driven the economics of the nation and Malaysia had been underdeveloped especially from its technological/modernisation aspects. Between the time of independence (1957) and the 70's, Malaysia had gone through an unstable patch of having to face many upheavals including the threat of communism. However, from the 80's, Malaysia has shown strong political stability, economic growth, social harmony and technological advancement.

The scenario as given above directly or indirectly creates a mental construct of how Malaysia would be to the eyes of a tourist. For instance MTPB (Malaysian Tourist Promotion Board) over the years has tried to give Malaysia various branding. Among the brands Malaysia has tried out includes, value for money, natural heritage, centre for meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE), shopping haven, food



paradise, international sporting venue – F1 and Commonwealth Games and the most recent brand is ‘Truly Asia’. Despite having grown in a positive manner as a nation coupled with the abundance of resources available to glorify Malaysia in a tourism sense, the image Malaysia holds somehow remains ambivalent. This alone had been the very core source of inspiration for me to embark on this thesis.

The consequent reasoning from the above situation includes; what would the successful image and how long would this brand/image stay, how would it assist or jeopardise the tourism practitioners/industry. The study of imagery clearly shows that it’s not just of academic importance but also of economic importance of a country. The evolving and dynamic political, economical, social and technological nature of a nation will also reflect upon the tourism destination image of the country. Thus, the study of destination image too evolves with the evolving nature of a destination.

Many studies have been attempted in the past, to find a formula to get a solution for destination image. Pre- 1991 destination image studies were objectively and quantitatively oriented. However, the study of destination image by Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) provided a holistic view to approach a destination image problem. In summary, Echtner and Ritchie concluded that the variables to test a destination image should constitute of physical, emotional and psychological aspects. The authors also recommended employing both qualitative and quantitative methods to capture the holistic attributes of destination image.

After more than 30 years of attempt by various researchers to analyse the image attributes, the question of how effective these attributes are for the dynamic changing destination environment to put it into practice still remains as a question mark. A more recent study by Chen and Hsu (2000) indicates that image attributes alone are insufficient to determine the positioning efforts of a destination. On the other hand the authors have commented on the need to question on the relationship between image attributes to other behavioural issues.

Therefore, at this stage of the research it is important and relevant to probe into the insights of both the image formation process as well as the definition of image. It is hoped that by further analysing these two components, a more complete and constructive critique can be identified to either support or deny the fact that image attributes alone are insufficient in the positioning effort of a destination.

The two approaches to examine the above matter would be "process" or/and "mechanism". The process model refers to looking at image from tourists' point of view. Mechanism refers to the ways image is defined/formed. Both perspectives are useful, thus combining the two, in addition to marketing point of view will be considered in this thesis. In relation to this, the key factors leading to the research question are as follows:

- The pre-90's era which is very attribute oriented with structured approach to measure image.
- The post-90's era, where attempt has been made to define the meaning of image to include a more holistic approach for measurement.
- The process (tourist driven) and the mechanism (definition/meaning driven)
- The problem of the word image
- The evolution of image. From philosophy to the science of psychology.
- Image or imagery (images)? Exploring the components of imagery
- Imagery: Defined in a tourism context. Has there been sufficient effort to truly define the meaning of images?

### **1.3 Aims, objectives, scope and focus of study**

The process, mechanism and a combination of the process and mechanism components as explained below are the reasons that were taken into account in formulating the general aims and specific objectives of this thesis:

- The process (the tourist driven approach). Most of this approach has been structured and quantitative whereby, the variables are pre-determined, and the tourist will have to make a choice from within the available content of a questionnaire.
- The mechanism (the meaning/definition driven approach). Emphasises on the qualitative nature of meaning, definition and formation of image. Research contribution from this approach has not been as overwhelming as the process approach.

- A combination of these two approaches would give both the meaning and measurement of destination images.

Hence, the general aim of this thesis is to understand the meaning and measurement of tourism destination image.

And the specific objectives of this thesis to achieve the general aim includes:

- to explore the meaning and measurement of tourism destination image
- to formulate a holistic approach to study tourism destination image
- to assess Malaysian destination image from a British perspective

To achieve the above general aim and specific objectives of this study, the following enquiries were taken into consideration.

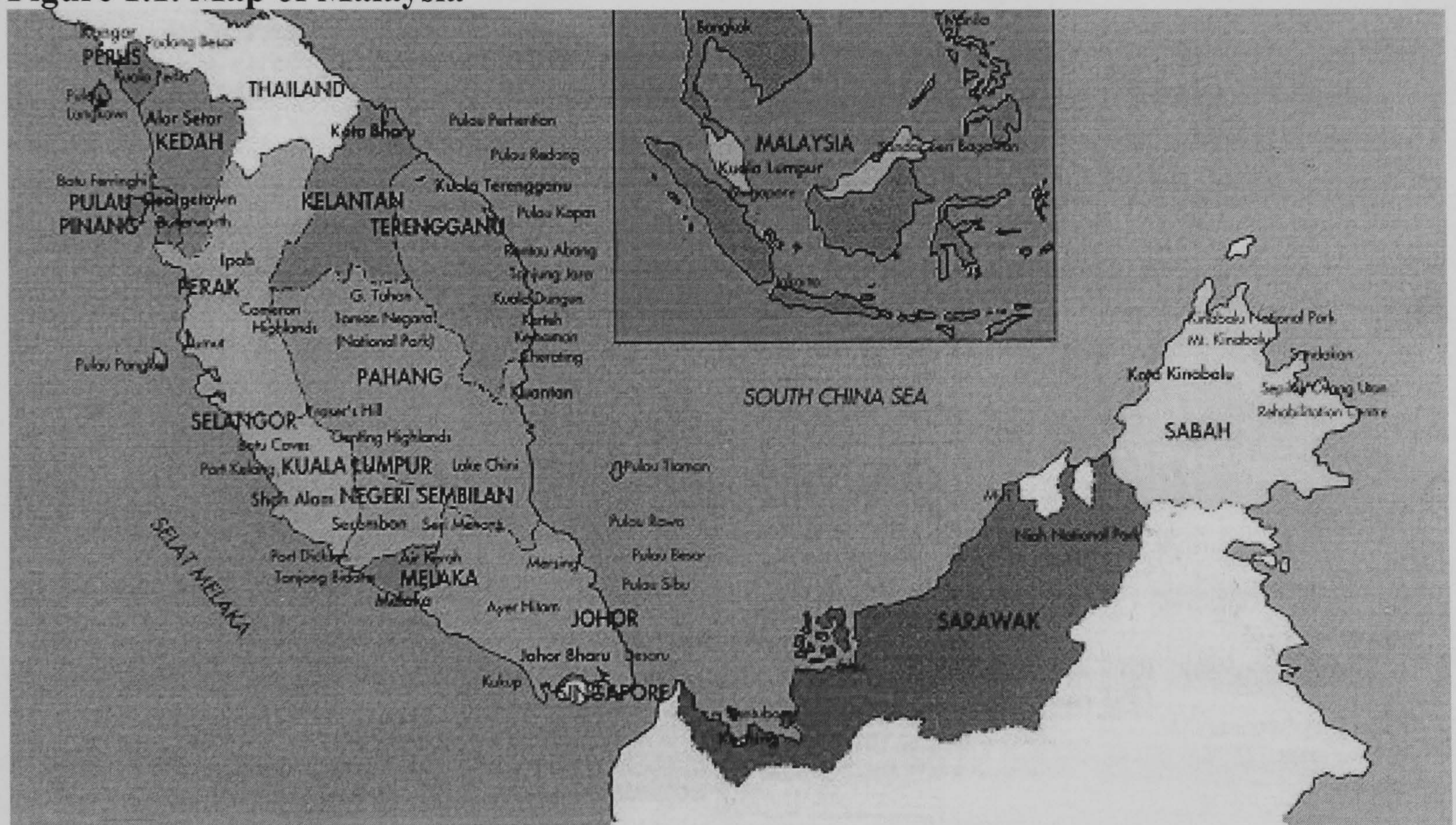
- An extensive literature review is required
- Dimensions derived from the literature to be tested and confirmed of their soundness
- A framework to empirically execute the relationship of imagery dimensions are required

Prior to moving ahead to probe into the above enquiries it is essential to set the parameters for this study, to have focus and to make it feasible within the given time frame of a PhD. Hence the scope of this thesis is to explore the imagery components as discussed above of Malaysia from a British perspective.

#### 1.4 Presenting Malaysia - a British perspective.

The scope involves two nations; Malaysia the destination and the UK as the target market. Hence, this section will provide an overview of these two nations to give a general idea of the parameter of study that we will discuss of. Malaysia (Figure 1.1), west and east is separated by the South China Sea and is located at the heart of South East Asia in the midst of her fierce tourism competitors in the likes of Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia.

Figure 1.1. Map of Malaysia



Malaysia, having abundance of attractions both natural and man-made, good infrastructures coupled with good political stability is enjoying its benefits from tourism, with the tourism industry being ranked as the 2nd largest economic contributor

(Business Times, 2004) for the fifth year in running after manufacturing. Table 1.1 depicts the tourists' arrivals and receipts in the past five years as well as the forecast for the year 2004. With the exception of the year 2003 where the tourism industry experienced decline in tourist receipt and arrivals, tourism has recorded positive growth otherwise. The year 2003, after incident like the 9/11 and Bali bombing coupled with the SARS outbreak was among the reason for the decline.

**Table 1.1 Tourist arrivals and receipt (1999-2004)**

Year	Tourist Arrivals (Million)	Tourist receipt (RM million)
1999	7.93	12321.3
2000	10.22	17335.4
2001	12.78	24221.5
2002	13.29	25781.1
2003	10.58	21291.1
2004*	-	30000.0

\* *Forecast* *Source: Tourism Malaysia*

The above statistics looks promising. However, the question is whether Malaysia is realising its full potential as a destination. My discussion with academicians, practitioners and some top-level policy makers provides the scenario of Malaysia not performing as well as Thailand and Singapore? Why is Malaysian image lacking the strategic advantage compared to its competitors? Could it be the ambivalent Malaysian image? These are the question that this thesis will try to address.

At this juncture, Malaysia's tourism policies and future plans are visited. The 7<sup>th</sup> Malaysian (1996 –2000) plan saw tourism providing a helping hand for the recovery of

the Malaysian economy. Based upon tourism's strong economic contribution, the 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan (2001 – 2005) emphasised on greater efforts to provide a variety of quality tourism products to stimulate tourism demand both internationally and domestically. The 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysian plan also outlined the importance of formulating promotional strategies in established markets and emerging markets to capture larger market shares. The thrust of the 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysian plan for the tourism sector includes sustainable tourism development, integrated approach to tourism development, customer focused product development, year-round carnival atmosphere, enhancement of human resource development, emphasis on comfort, safety and security of tourists and forging strategic alliances with international cooperation. The Malaysian government's 8<sup>th</sup> plan allocated Ringgit Malaysia 1 billion to achieve the above outlined goals as shown per table 1.2.

**Table 1.2 Budget Allocations for Malaysian Tourism**

Development Allocation for Tourism, 1996-2005 (RM Million)			
Programme	7 <sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan		8 <sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan
	Allocation	Expenditure	Allocation
Heritage Preservation	56.0	42.4	125.0
Accommodation	49.0	34.0	35.5
Beautify/Protect /Clean Environment	89.2	69.5	295.3
Facilities/Infrastructure	335.5	276.2	473.6
Others	75.8	62.1	79.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>605.5</b>	<b>484.2</b>	<b>1009.0</b>

*Source: Tourism Malaysia*

A more generous allocation from the government comes as no surprise since the tourism sector has been one of the driving forces in terms of Malaysia's economic

contribution. The interest however is to see how these outlined goals in the 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan are put into practice and how much of these goals are achieved. Streamlining the investigation to the parameters of this thesis, the self-image portrayed by tourism Malaysia is reviewed. The promotional activities put together by the Malaysian Tourism Promotional Board to the UK market gave emphasis mainly to tourism resources, diversity, activities, infrastructure and accessibility. A compilation of the image (self-image) promoted in the form of a multimedia CD highlighted the attractive resources available in Malaysia. The images portrayed as resources includes natural forest, beaches, skyscrapers, shopping outlets, wildlife including plants (i.e. pitcher plant) and animals (i.e. orang utan), golf courses, shopping complexes, restaurants, hotels, mountains, plantation (agro-tourism) and historical sites. On diversity, the imagery portrayed includes the various ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese, Indian, Kadazan , Iban), the variety of food, the blend of east and west, the modern Malaysia amidst the conserved natural environment and to some extent on heritage. The resources, coupled with the diversity are then portrayed to provide a whole variety of activities. And the imagery projected in terms of activities includes beach holidays, shopping, dining, golfing, scuba diving and white water rafting. The promotional CD also projected imagery of high standards of infrastructures which includes hotels/resorts that are of international standards, physical infrastructures (i.e. motorways / highways) connecting between one destination and the other and finally the accessibility between the UK and Malaysia with as many as two dozen direct flights a week connecting these two destinations. Phrases like ‘Malaysia truly Asia’, ‘Malaysia a well kept secret’,



‘Malaysia truly a memorable Holiday’, ‘Malaysia a melting pot for diversity’ coupled with interesting background music with people engaged in activities and exotic pictures were included. Some advantageous points like English is widely spoken were also included. However, at the point of product saturation and a need to produce innovative experience how much impact these promotional strategies have upon the UK tourist can only be known at a later point of this thesis upon completing the empirical study.

Prior to moving on to the specifics of empirical evidence, it will be of great interest just to observe the performance of the UK market merely from a tourist arrival angle.

**Table 1.3 Five-year comparisons of UK tourist arrivals to Malaysia**

Year	UK Arrival	Total Arrival
1999	136398	7931149
2000	237757	10221582
2001	262423	12775073
2002	239294	13292010
2003	125569	10576915

*Source: Tourism Malaysia*

Although the market share of the UK remains approximately 2% of the total tourist arrival, tables 1.3 and 1.4 shows growth in the UK market, which reflects that the policies and implementation of the 8<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan shows a general trend of success. The exception in a decline in the year 2002-2003 was due to the general global decline in tourist travel pattern due to the uncontrollable external variables like 9/11, Bali

Bombing, SARS and war on Iraq. However, there has been a positive turnaround and the UK is back in the top ten ranking of tourist arrival to Malaysia after slipping to the 11<sup>th</sup> spot in the year 2003.

**Table 1.4 Ranking of top ten performing markets (1999-2004)**

Rank	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004*
1	Singapore	Singapore	Singapore	Singapore	Singapore	Singapore
2	Thailand	Thailand	Thailand	Thailand	Thailand	Thailand
3	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia	Indonesia
4	Japan	Japan	China	China	China	China
5	China	China	Japan	Japan	Brunei	Brunei
6	Brunei	UK	Brunei	Brunei	Japan	Japan
7	Taiwan	Australia	Taiwan	UK	India	UK
8	UK	Taiwan	UK	Taiwan	Australia	USA
9	Australia	Brunei	Australia	Australia	Taiwan	Taiwan
10	USA	USA	USA	India	USA	India
11					UK	

\* January – May 2004 (Source: Tourism Malaysia)

On a different note, the choice of UK is discussed first before moving on to the quest of exploring the imagery position of Malaysia. Firstly, why not study other countries or a mixture of different countries? A mixture of a few countries is not preferred due to the socio-cultural and socio-economical difference between different country's needs wants and demands. For instance the Chinese market segment may enjoy the modernisation of Malaysia as compared to the British who may enjoy the natural attributes. The UK with its long history with Malaysia since the colonial days right up to today's commonwealth nations relationship have strong socio-cultural and socio-economical link and is amongst the top ten revenue generating tourism market for Malaysia. On top

of that, the very reason this PhD is being pursued in the UK coupled with the consideration of using English as the media of research were contributing reasons namely from accessibility and communication angle.

Sketching out the aims and scope of study from the initial inspiration to explore the meaning and measurement of destination image especially from a Malaysian context will be the guiding principles to carry out the research to the next level to assess the known, unknown, knowable and unknowable of destination imagery.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to review on what researchers have found and suggested on the subject matter of image as a whole and Tourism Destination Image (TDI) specifically. Drawing from the discussion in the earlier chapter, the discussion of this literature chapter will probe the three divisions of process, mechanism and combined process-mechanism approaches of tourism destination image studies. However, prior to the specifics of destination image this chapter will dedicate the first section to the evolution of image; the word, its meaning and how it has come about.

#### **2.2 Imagery evolution – philosophy to science**

To begin with, it is safe to say that tourism does not have a strong recognition as a discipline with its own right (Weaver , 2000). Travel may have occurred as early as the birth of mankind but the concept of tourism would have come into place only after modern civilisation, and especially would have only been accessible in the early stages within the tourism context to the aristocrats, rich and famous and the celebrities. Thus, it is no surprise that theories from various other fields like psychology (Potter, 1988), geography (Cater, 2001), marketing (Telisman-Kosuta, 1989), history (Towner, 1988) ,

anthropology (Kaplan, 1996) economics (Papatheodorou, 2001) etc., have all contributed a fair share in the evolution process of today's tourism discipline.

As complex, dynamic and volatile the word image has been expressed in today's tourism literature, similarly scholars/researchers who have attempted to understand image in the past also agree that the word image itself is problematic and not an easy one to make meaning out of it.

Horowitz (1970) in the book *Image formation and cognition* has addressed the following on why the word image can be problematic:

- The word image is problematic because, in its root meaning, it means “ replica” (Sarbin and Juhasz, 1970).
- The nature of image formation is relevant to any study of thinking, emotion and perception.
- Any thought representation that has a sensory quality we call an image
- Image refers to a specific experience whereas imagery refers to different type of image experience collectively.
- Individual can express the content but are unaware of the underlying process or motives, which contributes to image formation.
- To explain image formation, two approaches might be of use:
  - Neurobiological science which emphasises on anatomic and physiologic causes,

- Psychological science focusing on cognitive use, psychodynamic meaning, and motivational aspects.

However, for the purpose of this thesis the neurobiological science technique will be omitted, as it will require expertise which is not possible due to resources, time frame and expert knowledge required in this area. Whereas the psychological science route is found more appropriate hence adopted to address the issues arising in this thesis.

Evaluation of the evolution of the study of image may hold great importance to recognise the roots of this subject matter in comparison to how the tourism academia has adopted it, and table 2.1 below provides an overview of imagery evolution.

**Table 2.1 Imagery evolution: Philosophy to science**

Philosopher/Scientist	Comment
Aristotle (Philosopher)	Considered images to be the basic elements of thought connected by associational relevance. Aristotle added that images have the power to motivate a person to emotion and effort.
Locke(1690-Philosopher)	Believed that thought developed as perception was recorded in residual images. These images were then recalled, as part of thought, and simple images could be recombined to form complex idea
Hume (1739)	Attempted to separate images from perceptions (used the terms idea and impressions) on the basis that perception had greater vividness, force and liveliness. The image, however was regarded as an exact copy of perception.
Hartley (1834)	Speculated that there was thought in imageless form through the use of word signification without sensory quality.
Mill (1829)	Was interested in the difference between perceptions and images(he called them sensations and ideas)
Sir Francis Galton (1893)	Was interested in how persons varied in their capacity to form mental images in different sense modes. Galton's study revealed that individuals can be typologies as visualisers, kinesthetes, audiles and so on.
Roe (1951)	Her study on representation of thoughts revealed that one-third of the respondents were visualisers, another third verbalisers and a quarter were 'imageless'. The imageless respondents knew something was going on but did not know what lead to that representation of thought.(The remaining respondents were mixed)
Holt (1964)	The study of imagery itself was ostracised from academic psychology, only to return more recently along with a renewed interest in cognitive processes.
Richardson (1999)	Imagery should be regarded not as a unitary psychological function but as the product of a complex system of interrelating components.

The turbulent wave 'image' has traveled over time has resulted in exploring the components and what consists of image and how it contributes to the image concept.

Here the question of image (singular) versus images (plural) arises. Addressed here is not just the perception or an involvement of solitary sense. It is a combination of senses, which contributes to information processed, which is stored in the brain as a mental representation. Thus, seeing is just not seeing with the eyes, imagining is not imagining words or a visual picture. It is a combination of all senses. Richardson (1999) explains that the imagery concept includes seeing (visual), hearing (auditory), smell (olfactory), taste (gustatory), touch (coetaneous), movement (kinaesthetic) and different bodily sensations (organic).

Thus, the sum of image is equal to imagery or images. To be relevant to the actual meaning and to acquire the breadth and depth of the true understanding of studying images (imagery), a definition is required. Discussion above shows that the definition can be illustrated as below:

$$I = \Sigma I_v + I_a + I_o + I_g + I_c + I_k + I_{og}$$

where, I is for Imagery  
I<sub>v</sub> is for visual image  
I<sub>a</sub> is for auditory image  
I<sub>o</sub> is for olfactory image  
I<sub>g</sub> is for gustatory image  
I<sub>c</sub> is for cutaneous image  
I<sub>k</sub> is for kinaesthetic image  
I<sub>og</sub> is for organic image

Hence, from this a quick visit to imagery evolution; philosophy to science, the following deductions can be made:



- The nature of image formation is relevant to any study of thinking, emotion and perception.
- Any thought representation that has a sensory quality we call an image.
- Images comprise of our bodily senses, which includes seeing, hearing, smell, taste, and movement.
- Image versus Imagery. What is the difference? Image refers to a specific experience whereas imagery refers to different type of image experience collectively.
- An individual's description of image can be expressed from various aspects: Contents, vividness (intensity), clarity, colour, shading, shapes, movement, foreground and background characteristics. If observed carefully, the description above focuses only on one aspect of imagery, stated as visual image by Horowitz (1970).
- Other attributes of image an individual can express includes:
  - i ) how the image entered his/her awareness
  - ii) its duration
  - iii) associated emotions
- Individual can express the content but are unaware of the underlying process or motives, which contributes to image formation.

The word image and imagery have been and will be used freely throughout the discussion of this thesis. However, the usage of both terms should be treated as a

holistic meaning of what constitutes the total sensory combination of imagery and not be treated as a single component of the sense except for situation where it is specified otherwise. Points to ponder from a tourism context from the above discussion include; research to date has yet to address the definition process of destination image.

Although, the likes of Gunn (1977) and Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) have tried to explain the formation of image, the question of imagery has yet to be defined in a holistic manner. Holistic should not only include the various psychological and functional aspects of tourists image but tourism image. This notion is further strengthened by Hankinson's (2004) argument that says the saliency of organic images from a cultural, and historical point alone is insufficient. To capture the holistic aspects of a destination image, an assessment should comprise of all actors in the industry and should constitute of non organic image attributes like the accessibility to destination and so on and so forth. Therefore, a holistic tourism image ideally should include both the process and mechanism dimensions of various tourism actors; tourist –the demand component; the supply chain – NTO, tour operator, travel agency, airlines; the drivers – advertisement, media, brochure, world wide web. An overlapping assessment and examination of these components are required if strategic holistic implications were to be derived from an imagery study.

Hence, this thesis embarks on the journey on how to bring together these complexity and multidimensional aspects of imagery to be a strategic tool in making a destination successful.

### **2.3 Imagery from a tourism standpoint**

Study of destination image seems to be amongst the favourite subject area within the tourism discipline as large quantity of research have been and is being carried out. It is understood and agreed upon by several researchers (Gallarza, 2002; Echtner & Ritchie, 1991, 1993; Jenkins 1999 and Hankinson 2004) the complex, dynamic and challenging nature of studying destination image. The challenging issues have not hindered the quest of exploring destination image but have further enhanced the research done in this area namely the mechanism, process, drivers and implications components as addressed in Table 2.2 below.

**Table 2.2 Literature review on destination image**

Research areas addressed	Authors <sup>a</sup>
Mechanism- meaning, formation, definition	4, 8, 18, 22, 24, 27, 34, 35, 42, 46, 49, 53, 57, 60, 62, 65, 66, 69, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 82, 84, 85
Process – actors (tourist, NTO), measurement	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 58, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 79, 80, 82
Drivers – advertisement, media, Internet	6, 46, 49, 55, 81, 86.
Image implications – marketing, policies, promotion etc.	2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, 24, 30, 39, 40, 46, 48, 54, 57, 59, 61, 66, 67, 72, 73, 74, 77, 78, 81, 83
<sup>a</sup> 1. Ahmed (1991), (1996); 2. Andersen (1997); 3. Andreu (2000); 4. Baloglu (1997), (1998), (1999a), (1999b). 5. Bignon (1998); 6. Bojanic (1991); 7. Botha (1999); 8. Botterill (1989), (1987); 9. Bramwell (1996); 10. Brown (1998); 11. Calantone (1989); 12. Chacko (2000); 13. Chaudhary (2000); 14. Chen J(2000); 15. Chen P (1999); 16 Chon (1990), (1991), (1991a); 17. Crompton (1979), (1992); 18. Dann (1996); 19. Dadgostar (1995);20. Dillon (1986);21. Dimanche (1998);22. Dolnicar (1999);23. Driscoll (1990), (1994);24. Echtner & Ritchie (1991), (1993); 25. Embacher (1989); 26. Fakeye & Crompton (1991); 27.Fridgen (1987); 28. Gartner (1986), (1989), (1994), (1987), (1992); 29. Goodrich (1978a), (1978b), (1979); 30. Grabler (1997a), 1997b); 31. Haahti (1983); 32. Heung (2000); 33. Hu (1993); 34. Hunt (1975); 35. Illiewich (1998); 36. Illum (1995); 37. Jaffe (1984); 38. Jutla(2000); 39. Kale (1986); 40. Kim (2000); 41. King (1994); 42. MacKay (1997), (2000); 43. Mazanec (1997); 44. McLellan (1983); 45. Mohsin (1999); 46. Morgan et al (1998), (2001), (2002), (2003); 47. Murphy(1997), (1999), (2000); 48. Opperman (1996); 49. Pearce (1977), (1982); 50.Perdue (1986), (2000); 51. Phelps (1986); 52. Pizam (1991), (1978); 53.Reilly (1990); 54. Ritchie (1998); 55. Santos (1998); 56. Schneider (1999); 57. Selby and Morgan (1996); 58. Tapachai (2000); 59. Uysal (2000); 60. Walmsley (1992), (1993), (1998); 61. Wee (1985); 62. Young (1995), (1999); 63. Alhemoud (1991); 64. Carmichael (1992); 65. Coshall (2000); 66. Jenkins (1999); 67. Moutinho (1984); 68. Ohm (1990); 69. Sirgy (2000); 70. Um (1991), (1990); 71. Waitt (1996); 72. Woodside (1989), (1982); 73. Buhalis (2000); 74. Kotler (1999); 75. Gunn (1997); 76. Leiper (1979); 77. Pritchard and Morgan (2001); 78. Konecnik (2004); 79. Hui (2003); 80 Rezende-Parker (2003); 81.Dore (2003);82. Pike(2003); 83.Day (2002); 84. Laws (2002); 85. Hankinson (2004); 86. Seaton (1996)	

Amongst the 4 components, it appears that most research have been carried out within the process context where the nature of study is more toward measuring the attributes held by the actors in the tourism industry involved rather than understanding the meaning of it. Other areas of contributions also come from a policy/implication angle and the mechanism attribute that contribute to the structure and meaning of destination image. However, the driver component, which is the media or platform of communication, has only attracted fewer researchers within the tourism discipline though research is carried out vastly in the marketing/branding/positioning domains.

### **2.3.1 Imagery mechanism**

The mechanism component addresses the meaning, structure, formation and definition of tourism destination image. An important factor as well as the turning point in destination image research comes from the contribution of Echtner & Ritchie (1991, 1993) where attempt was made to address the imagery issue in a holistic manner. The contributions of these researchers have also been the guiding principle as well as a platform to further explore this thesis. Like Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993), Jenkins (1999) mentioned briefly that the study of images doesn't necessarily be based on words or numbers alone. Jenkins noted that usage of visual aids to measure image or generally in the tourism studies has yet to be explored to its full potential by tourism researchers. Botterill and Crompton (1987) have been the names found in literature that has attempted this method. All this alternative techniques have been a revelation in understanding the meaning and formation of image rather than simply measuring it.

With Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) mentioning multi-sensory while Jenkins (1999) addressing on visual aids. This brings to the search of the word image, what it means, whether sufficient work has been done to give this word a proper meaning. Could this be the reason why everyone seems to be interpreting the word image differently? Thus, the probing of definition of the image is a good starting point to answer the above questions. The very first and rather a simple definition come from Hunt (1971) who describes image as impressions that a person or persons hold about a state in which they do not reside. A more generalised definition of image was presented by Markin (1974) who defines image as our own personalised, internalised and conceptualising understanding of what we know. Lawson and Bond-Bovy (1977) on the other hand saw image as an expression of knowledge, impressions, prejudice, imaginations and emotional thoughts and individual has on a specific object or place. Crompton (1979) described destination image as the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination. On the concept of image, Dichter (1985) explains that a political candidate, a product and a country can all have images. Dichter adds on to say that image describes not just individual traits or qualities but the total impression and entity makes on the minds of others. Reynolds (1985) on image defines that of a mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions. Reynolds adds to this concept by saying image comes into being through a creative process in which selected impressions are elaborated, embellished and ordered. Embacher and Butler (1989) on their views of image,

described image as comprising of ideas or conceptions held individually or collectively of the destination under investigation. Their addition to the imagery concept is that image may comprise both cognitive and evaluative components. Fakeye and Cromptons (1991) definition was more tourist specific where the definition is spelt out as image being the mental construct developed by a potential tourist on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions. Kotler (1994) provided a very straightforward definition, which described image of a place as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person holds of it. Gartner (1993, 1996) defined that destination images are developed by three hierarchically interrelated components of cognitive, affective and conative. On a different note of a more generic definition, Santos (1994) defined image as a mental representation of attributes and benefits sought of a product. Finally, Parentau (1995) describes image as favourable and unfavourable prejudice that the audience and distributors have of the product or destinations. The strength of Parentau's definition is that the acknowledgement that image can be both positive and negative; giving a broader scope that what may be favourable to one may be unfavourable to another. On top of that the use of the word audience permits various actors and just not tourist that permits a holistic sense of image. The word audience also allows the influence of drivers such as advertisement, media and Internet to be incorporated within the imagery context. Furthermore the inclusion of distributors who can be NTO, tour operators, and travel advisers; the supply components is also addressed as compared to just relating image to tourists

alone. This all-encompassing definition, which seems to be the most appropriate definition, is preferred for the purpose of this thesis.

Besides definition, the image formation has been the area that has been probed to understand the structure and meaning of image. Gunn (1997) speaks of three different stages in the formation of image. Firstly, the organic image that comes from the cultural, historical and educational knowledge of a destination. It is an image that has been associated with the destination for a very long-time through reading newspapers and novels, watching documentaries and movies listening to radio and attending history or geography classes. There is not much advertising intervention on such image formation. The second phase of image formation as addressed by Gunn known as induced image relates to the influential role of marketing, positioning and advertising campaigns generated by NTOs, travel advisers and tour operators. This can come in the form of travel brochures, billboards, Internet, television and radio programmes promoting holiday destinations etc. The induced images are used to either enhance the existing favourable image or to repair/replace the unfavourable image of destinations.

The third phase of image formation takes place after the actual experience of the audience/tourist to the destination. This is where the personal experience as compared to the organic and induced image are assessed to see if the actual meets perceived image. Travelers are normally satisfied when the actual image meets or exceeds perception. The danger arises when the traveler feels that the induced image have been



blown out of proportion as compared too the actual image – an area where tourism, promoters will have to be careful if long-term business were to achieve success. However, Hankinson (2004) notes that not much emphasis has been given to the image formation process as it plays an influential role to understand the structure of meaning held by actors in the tourism sector.

Earlier discussions show clearly, that Echtner & Ritchie , Jenkins and Gunn to name a few have been amongst many authors who have reviewed the meaning of imagery. Yet there has been confusion in the usage of the word image. Another point to review is that none of the previous researchers have actually utilised an approach to evaluate and capture the variety of components (different senses) of possible images tourists might hold. Research results are evident that the decision making process of every individual varies in making a destination choice. Thus, it is of high importance to understand these different components of imagery for future destination marketing strategies and this can be achieved through identifying and combining the gaps between the mechanism and the process component of imagery.

### **2.3.2 Imagery process**

The imagery process is the most visited and scrutinised area within the destination image studies. The imagery process consists of studies involving various actors like tourists, students, tour operators, travel advisers and NTOs. The other aspects of research addressed within the context of the imagery process component include the

various methods employed (qualitative and quantitative) as well as the psychological and functional attributes (variables) that are being studied. The first step taken to analyse the gap is to look at previous literatures in tourism destination image. A distinct difference was identified in the approach adopted by researchers pre and post 90's. The pre 90's era emphasised on the attribute based with one or two exceptions trying to define the meaning of image. The post 90's era, tried to define the meaning as well as measure the attributes. Echtner and Ritchie to give a holistic viewpoint of image delivered the major contribution. At this junction, it is important to illustrate the previous studies and to avoid reinventing the wheel.

Pre 90's saw a gap of holistic (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991) approach in defining and measuring destination image. Table 2.3 reveals the majority of researchers' preference towards structured approach, which denies the respondents to express what images they hold of a destination. It is also evident from their research objectives expressed that the main purpose of their study is to measure but not to explore the definition or meaning of images. Some of the researchers on the other hand made vague definition of image.

**Table 2.3. Pre-90's research affinity towards structured approach**

Reference	Objective	Definition	Methodology	Technique for the generation of attributes
Hunt(1975)	To measure the images of four states;Utah, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming	Perceptions held by potential visitors about an area	Structured: - 20 attributes - 7 and 5 point Sem.Diff. Scale	- Tourism experts - Researcher's judgement
Crompton (1977)	To measure the image of Mexico	Organised representations of a destination in a cognitive system	Structured: - 18 attributes - 7 point Sem.Diff. Scale	- General material/brochures - Consumer interviews (N = 36)
Goodrich (1977)	To measure the image of nine destinations: Florida, Hawaii, Mexico, California and five Caribbean Islands	Not defined	Structured: - 10 attributes - 7 point Likert Scale	- Tourism experts - Travel brochure
Crompton (1979)	To measure the image of Mexico in different states of the United States	Sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination	Structured: - 30 attributes - 7 point Sem. Diff. Scale	- General material/brochures - Consumer interviews (N = 36)
Pearce (1982)	To measure the pre-travel and post travel images of seven countries	Not defined	Structured - 13 attributes - 6 point Likert Scale	Modified Kelly Repertory Grid Technique ( N = 10)
Haathi & Yavas (1983)	To measure the image of Finland (twelve countries were included in the survey)	Not defined	Structured - 10 attributes - 9 point Likert Scale	- Literature review - Focus group of travel agents
Crompton & Duray (1985)	To measure the image of Texas (while testing alternative approaches to important-performance analysis	Not defined	Structured - 28 attributes - 5 point Sem. Diff. Scale	- General material/brochures - Consumer interviews (N = 100)

Kale & Weir (1986)	To measure the image of India	Not discussed	Not discussed	Structured: - 26 attributes - 7 point Likert Scale	- Not discussed
Phelps (1986)	To measure pre-travel and post-travel images of Menorca	Perceptions or impressions of a place	Perceptions or impressions of a place	Structured: - 32 attributes - Checklist of attributes	- Researchers' judgement
Tourism Canada (1986-1989)	To measure the image of Canada in various major tourism generating markets	How a country is perceived relative to others	How a country is perceived relative to others	Structured: - 29 attributes - 5 point Likert Scale	- Not discussed
Gartner & Hunt (1987)	To measure the change in Utah's image over a 12 year period.	Impressions that a person ...holds about a state in which they do not reside	Impressions that a person ...holds about a state in which they do not reside	Structured: - 11 Attributes - 5 point Sem. Diff. Scale	- Tourism Experts - Researchers' Judgement
Richardson & Crompton (1988)	To explore differences in images held of USA and Canada between French and English Canadians	Perceptions of vacation attributes	Perceptions of vacation attributes	Structured - 10 Attributes - 4 point Comparative Scale	- Used attributes from Tourism Canada Vacation Patterns Survey
Gartner (1989)	To measure the images of four states : Utah, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming( utilising multi-dimensional scaling technique)	A complex combination of various products and associated attributes	A complex combination of various products and associated attributes	Structured: - 15 Attributes - 5 Point Likert Scale	- Not discussed
Calantone et. Al. (1989)	To measure the images of eight Pacific Rim countries held by tourists from various countries of origin	Perceptions of potential tourist destinations	Perceptions of potential tourist destinations	Structured: - 13 Attributes - 7 Point Likert Scale	- Not discussed
Reily (1990)	To measure the image of Montana	Not individual traits...but the total impressions an entity makes	Not individual traits...but the total impressions an entity makes	Unstructured - open-ended questions	- Not applicable

Thus, Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) from their review proposed a holistic structure.

Their recommendations include:

- Destination image to be envisioned as containing two main components; attributes and holistic based,
- Each destination image contains functional, or more tangible, and psychological or more abstract, characteristics.
- Images of destinations can also range from those based on 'common' functional and psychological traits to those based on more distinctive or even unique features, events, feelings or auras
- In order to capture all of these components, a combination of structured and unstructured method to be used to measure destination image.

The contribution of Echtner and Ritchie above paved new path in the studies of destination images.

However, even with more researchers exploring the meaning alongside measurement of image in the post 90's it is found that the tendency of researchers to fall back purely on a positivist approach was still preferred (Table 2.4). Although positivist approach is convenient for data collection, coding and analysis, if the process of variable determination is not carefully executed, false or inaccurate results would be obtained, defeating the purpose to position a target market towards the needs, wants and demand

of the clientele (tourist). Jenkins (1999), thus proposes a model of two phases; the first phase being the variable identification process (qualitative approach) followed by the second phase (quantitative).

**Table 2.4 Post 90's research affinity in addressing image.**

Year/Journal/Au	Objectives/aims/purpose	Process / Mechanism	Approach/ Method
00/JTR, v.38.p.340 M.J.Sirgy, C. Su	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrative modelling for tourist decision making</li> </ul>	-process(tourist centred)	hypothetical
00/JTR, v.39.p.37 N.Tapachai	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess beneficial image influencing decision of tourist</li> </ul>	-process(tourist centred)	Unstructured, open ended question
01/TM, v.22.p.345 J.S. Chen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess designative(cognitive) and evaluative(affect) attributes of Korean Tourist</li> </ul>	-process (tourist centred)	Open-ended and likert scale
00/JTR, v.39.p.85 J.T. Coshall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate the importance of repertory grid approach as a tourists image measurement</li> </ul>	-process(tourist centred)	RGA
00/IJTR, v2.p.141 M. Oppermann	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usage of triangulation in tourism</li> </ul>	-to be investigated further	Triangulation
00/JTR, v38.p.411 J.S.Chen, H.C.Hsu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Image attributes affecting tourist choice behaviour</li> </ul>	- process(tourist centred)	Structured, likert scale
91/JTS, v2.p.2 Echtner, Ritchie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine the concept of destination image</li> </ul>	-mechanism & process	Unstructured and structured
99/IJTR, v1.p1 OH Jenkins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess concept of tourist destination image from different academic disciplines</li> </ul>	-process	Unstructured and structured
97/JTR, v35.p11 Baloglu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess affective space structure to large-scale environments (i.e., tourism destination countries)</li> </ul>	-process	Structured
99/JTR, v38.p144 Baloglu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>compare U.S. international pleasure travelers' current images of four Mediterranean destinations: Turkey, Egypt, Greece, and Italy.</li> </ul>	- process	Structured
97/JTR, v36.p35	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hypothesized that destination experience, destination image, and specific demographic characteristics combined significantly influence market behaviour.</li> </ul>	-process	-structured/modelling

The preference of measurement over meaning is also evident in Pike's (2002) work where out of 142 papers reviewed between 1973 and 2000, majority (114) papers used structured method as compared to less than half (63 papers) reported the use of qualitative techniques.

The qualitative techniques used include free elicitation/open ended questions (Dann, 1996; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Embacher & Buttle, 1989; Reilly, 1990), focus groups (Amor et al., 1994; Driscoll et al., 1994; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Guthrie and Gale, 1991; King, 1994), in-depth interviews (Amor et al., 1994; Bramwell and Rawding, 1996; Haahti, 1986; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Selby and Morgan, 1996) and content analysis (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Bramwell and Rawding, 1996; Crompton, 1979; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; ; Embacher and Buttle, 1989; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Fesenmaier and MacKay, 1996; Goodrich, 1982; Haahti, 1986; King, 1994; Reilly, 1990; Stabler, 1998).

As for the quantitative techniques used the majority were multivariate methods with fewer bivariate methods employed. The multivariate methods were mainly used for data deduction procedures namely factor analysis (Ahmed, 1991, 1996; Baloglu, 1997, 1999; Calantone et al., 1989; Crompton et al., 1992; Crompton, 1979; Driscoll et al., 1994; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Guthrie & Gale, 1991; Muller, 1995; Opperman, 1996a, 1996b; Schroeder, 1996; Sternquist, 1985; Walmsley and Young , 1998) and multidimensional scaling (Baloglu and Brinberg, 1997; Gartner,



1989; Goodrich, 1982; Guthrie and Gale, 1991; Haahti, 1986). Other multivariate methods employed were for the purpose of grouping ( Embacher and Buttle, 1989; Muller, 1995) and dependence analysis (Ahmed, 1991, 1996; Baloglu, 1997; Baloglu and McCleary, 1999; Carmichael, 1992; Chon, 1992; Crompton, 1979; Fakeye and Crompton, 1991; Gartner and Hunt, 1987; Schroeder, 1996). The contributors for the bivariate methods include Ahmed (1991), Borchgrevink and Knutson (1997), Chon (1991), Fakeye and Crompton (1991), Gartner and Hunt (1987) and Schroeder (1996).

Whether qualitative or quantitative, the techniques were used either for elicitation of the variables that constituted the image of a destination or to test the existing variables to assess the favourable and unfavourable images. Amongst the most common functional and psychological (Gallarza, 2000) variables used to assess image includes activities, landscape, nature, culture, entertainment, shopping, information, sport facilities, transportation, accommodation, gastronomy, price, climate, relaxation, accessibility, safety, social interaction, residents' receptiveness, originality and service quality.

Another shortcoming within the process context of image is that assessment of image has been mainly demand driven. And of the demand components, majority of the study has been on tourists with the exceptions like Morgan et al. (2002) studying a more specialised VFR market and McClellan (1983) focusing on tour operators. More studies on the distribution pattern and supply chain of what constitutes and forms image have to be carried out if a holistic image of a destination to be promising for future planning

and policy implication. NTOs, travel adviser, inbound and outbound tour operators, airlines and policy makers should all be pulled into the study of image to see the influence of these various actors in the formation of a destination image. On the demand side of it, just studying the students market or tourist market alone is insufficient. Further segmentation of business travelers, friends, relatives as well as students market have to be captured to understand the potential of each market segments both individually and collectively.

### **2.3.3 Imagery drivers**

Imagery and how it is communicated is important to all parties involved. History, culture, education are all parts and parcel of growing up and the imagery embedded through this process; the organic image is something that would have become part of ones belief system. It will be inappropriate even to attempt to reverse or manipulate such image as it will alter truth and loose its unique sense of a destination. However, to cleverly position such images, through innovation and creativity along with other psychological and functional attributes to lure tourist requires appropriate drivers. The drivers, the communication tools comes in many shapes and forms of marketing, promoting, positioning and advertising activities. Though these drivers have been around for a long while, the integration of these drivers into the study of destination image to provide a holistic picture is not seen to be the choice of many researchers with exception to the valuable works of Morgan and Pritchard (1996, 1999, 2002) and Seaton (1996) in advertising and branding. The inclusion of such drivers is important as

to evaluate, assess and utilize the structure of tourism meaning as a form of induced image to promote, market and position a destination. Preferred, popular and attractive communicating media in the form of newspapers, magazines, travel brochures, Internet and even road shows will have to be examined on its effectiveness to create a favourable induced image to potential tourists. To achieve this, good partnership/networking with feedback amongst the industry players are required and this should be coupled with assessment of the most influential and effective media of communication that is utilised most by tourists.

#### **2.3.4 Imagery implications**

Practitioners in particular will see research of no use if policy and implications are not derived from such process. Hence, it is not of surprise that there has been a fair amount of research contribution when it comes to destination image's policy implications. The majority of work on imagery implications is from a marketing angle addressing *specific countries* (Alhemoud, 1996; Andreu, 2000; Bignon, 1998; Chaudhary, 2000; Embacher, 1989; Haahti, 1983; Hui, 2003; Konecnik, 2004, Murphy, 1999; Pritchard and Morgan, 2001; Rezende-Parker, 2003; Schneider, 1999; Shanka, 1999) as a destination; *amenities* like specialist (Botha, 1999; Carmichael, 1992; Crompton, 1992; Hudson, 1998; Kozak, 1998; Vaughan, 1999) resorts as destination; *NTO/DMO's* (Lynn Dore, 2003; Uysal, 2000; Wee, 1985) role; the role of *trade and industry* (Dimanche, 1998; Gartner, 1994; Illum, 1995; McLellan, 1983; Mohsin, 1999; Perdue, 1986; Roehl, 1990); and the *role of communicative* (Bojanic, 1991; Ehemann, 1977;

Gronhaug, 1992; MacKay, 1997; Morgan and Pritchard, 2001; Pritchard and Morgan, 1996; Santos, 1998) media.

Other areas of imagery implications that tourism scholars have contributed include *new strategies* (Baloglu, 1999a; Dann, 1996; Day, 2002; Dillon, 1986; Jaffe, 1984; Leiper, 1979; Nickerson, 1999; Scott, 1978; Shih, 1986; Sirgy, 2000) as well as to tourism *development and planning* (Chon, 1991; Goodrich, 1978b; Gunn, 1997; Hunt, 1975; Ritchie, 1998; Woodside, 1988).

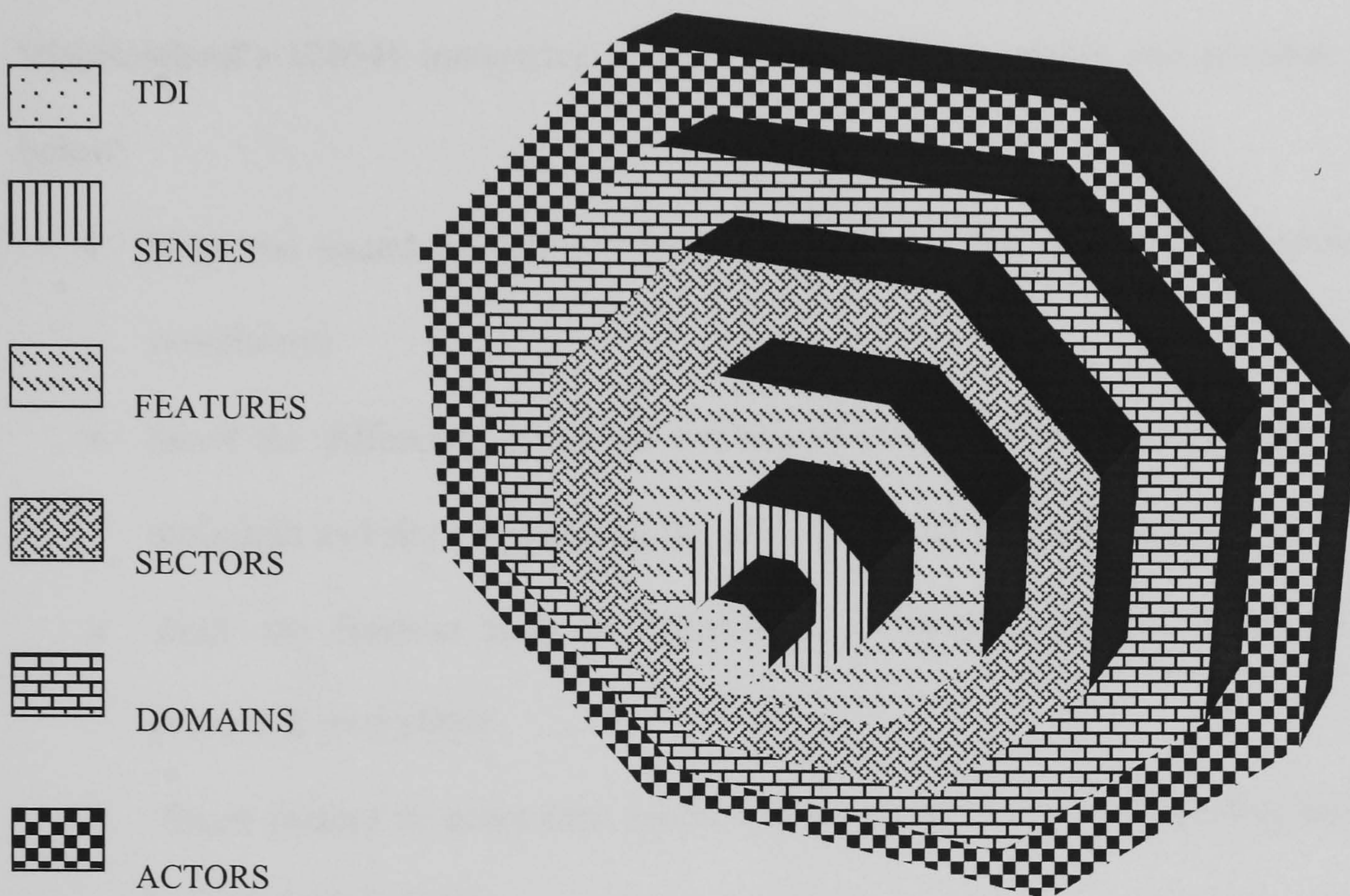
The study of imagery seems to have a fairly large amount of literature within the tourism discipline explaining on the mechanism, process, driver and implication components though some component seem more popular than the others. . However, for the purpose of studying a particular market segment's (i.e. British perspective) imagery on a particular destination (i.e. Malaysia) addressing one component and leaving out the other will not portray a holistic image. Although various efforts had been made to address imagery in a holistic fashion, it appears only to be sub-holistic. For instance, Echtner and Ritchie' s (1991, 1993) three-dimensional view is holistic if applied on the tourist component alone. However, for the study scope of this thesis, a piece-meal approach of focusing on only one component may fail to address the depth and breadth of imagery. Hence, based on the above literature findings and acknowledging the complex, multiple, relativistic and dynamic (Gallarza, 2002) nature of imagery study, the following section draws a conceptual framework that will be both relevant and useful for the scope of this thesis.

## **2.4 Conceptual framework – fixing the puzzle**

First and foremost, the association of the imagery component should be visualised as a closely-knit, interwoven, networked system (Liu, 1994). Analogy to this will be the case of a spider web on how one string connects to the other and how these strings as a whole support the complete structure of the spider web. And also how if one of the strings breaks, will disrupt the function of the web/network. In similar fashion, six elements are derived from the literature scan that will constitute of what will be the destination imagery web or conceptual framework. The six elements are:

- TDI – tourism destination images
- Senses
- Features
- Sectors
- Domains
- Actors

**Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework of tourism destination image**



As per figure 2.1 above, the core, right in the middle of these elements in association is the imagery of a destination. Enveloping this core, are the senses that have been discussed in the earlier part of this chapter. The sensory element is essential simply because of its catalytic nature, which eventually becomes the basis of decision-making. This sensory component not only becomes the governing element for tourists alone but also other actors of various sectors. Whether organic or induced imagery, it is these senses (i.e. see, touch, hear, taste, smell) that makes the imagery become a reality to the beholder. Though it is too early to make suggestions for sensory implications, but the clever use of senses by VisitScotland (2004) in their promotions are good example of

tapping into the sensory element and something that should be given consideration to strengthen imagery of a destination.

VisitScotland's (2004) innovative sensory usage through words and pictures are as below:

- *Hear* the sound of nation's heartbeat (picture of a man playing violin in a symphony)
- *Smell* the difference in the air (picture of trees with the backgrounds of lake, mountain and sky emphasising the pristine natural environment)
- *Taste* the freshest food in nature's larder (picture of seafood appetizingly presented on a plate)
- *Touch* history at every turn (picture of a ruined monument standing tall in the midst of wilderness)
- *See* our beautiful, vibrant cities (picture of people fine dining in a dim lit setting)

In an era of product saturation where moods (Pritchard and Morgan, 1998) of consumers have to be tapped into for strategic advantage of a destination, the work done by VisitScotland (2004) is worth the applause.

The following element, features constitute of the functional and psychological attributes that are required in promoting a destination. The functional features can be physical and

man-made, like the infrastructure of transportation, accommodation or natural attractions like island, mountains, animals and plants. The functional features can also consist of non-physical elements like tourist information and foreign exchange services. On the other hand the psychological features of a destination will include the authenticity, uniqueness and liveliness to name a few features that creates the aura, ambience and emotions. A list of commonly used feature has been discussed in the earlier part of this chapter. However, for a country like Malaysia where literature on the assessment of image is hardly found, including as many features and deriving these features from an exploratory study may be required. Also to be noted is that, though generic features of destinations may be similar but specific features may vary based upon the market segment that is being studied as the requirements, needs, wants and demands will vary based upon the socio-demographic and socio-economic background of a given market segment. For instance the affinity of British tourist (Tourism Malaysia, 2001) towards beach and relaxation as compared to the Japanese market who prefers shopping and golf.

On a different note, the following element of discussion is on the various sectors that form the tourism industry. The various sectors including food and beverage, airlines/airport, accommodation, local transportation and intermediaries (agents, operators) are all essential in portraying the image of a destination. These are the sectors that support the tourism industry and their role should not be sidelined. However, from the literature search, it is evident that these varieties of sectors are not



the preferred respondents for researchers as only very few studies have actually probed into these various sectors. Hence, to identify and promote a successful image, the inclusion of the influential roles of these sectors is something that should not be avoided.

Moving on to the next element, domain, is an issue that has to be addressed as this can be one of the main reasons for why imagery study have a tendency to follow stereotyped approaches. From the literature, it is evident from various angles like the type of journal articles published, from the background/training of researcher as well as the school of thought/philosophy that the researcher holds to, plays an influential role in determining the type of research carried out. However, the complexity of imagery study requires fusion not only at technical level of data analysis but also at a philosophical level. A philosophy that enables such fusion will be a way for various domains (i.e. marketing, economy, geography, psychology, history) to interact freely whether qualitative or quantitative, positivist or interpretivist, to merge and blend, hence allowing the right mixture to resolve the approaches in carrying out an imagery study in an all encompassing manner.

The final element that completes the associations of network within the imagery framework is the actors or players. Here, the emphasis should be given to tourism imagery and not tourist imagery. Tourism imagery has a wider scope of including both the demand (consumer/tourist) and supply (intermediaries-agents/operators and source-

NTO/DMO) component as compared to the use of the word tourist where only one element of the image of destination is addressed. However, the use of the word tourist and the study of image based on tourists alone seemed to be preferred by researchers as explained in the earlier part of this chapter. The omission of these actors may not only provide an unclear image of a destination but will also hold an adverse implication impact. These actors who play a major role in tourism service/product creation and delivery may feel their voices and opinion are not heard when it comes to policy making, hence creating a situation where these unsatisfied actors will be under performing. On the other hand the failure to include these players will deny the knowledge of unfavourable image positioning if what is produced and delivered does not match the consumer preference.

In order to achieve the general aims of this thesis, that is to understand the meaning and measurement of tourism destination images, it is of utmost importance that these six elements are treated as interwoven and overlapping between one and the other so that a holistic measure can be achieved. However, prior to putting this conceptual mapping into an operational framework, an exploratory study from a British perspective is carried out in the following chapter to both crystallise and provide further confirmation of this conceptual framework.

## **CHAPTER3**

### **EXPLORATION AND EXECUTION**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter has two purposes. Firstly, the exploratory study as discussed towards the end of the earlier chapter will help in crystallising and confirming the elements drawn out in the conceptual framework. The exploratory study also intends to confirm the existing variables (features) in use and the new variables that could be found. The exploratory study's end results will be compared with the conceptual framework derived from the literature review to identify the gaps that will have to be addressed in this thesis. The second purpose of this chapter is to find the appropriate operational framework to execute the research questions of this thesis based on the gaps identified.

The study of tourism destination image can be complicated and confusing. The actors involved in the tourism industry being human beings and not just the physical and visible infrastructure leads to the fundamental query of the human's decision-making process. The human factor in the tourism industry does not involve just the tourist – the demand factor. The supply chain should also be given equal consideration for a successful image of a nation to be promoted globally. This involves understanding the pattern of decision makers from the host country as well as the visitors' countries. This can be a tedious affair as getting access to the national tourism organisation (NTO) or any other related government agencies might be difficult. Nevertheless, if a totality

approach is avoided in addressing a TDI study, the results might be bias towards just the party involved in the study. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to unfold the underlying facets of tourism destination image. The process of unfolding on what lies beneath TDI is to identify the networks in association and to come up with a comprehensive and holistic system to address a TDI issue in future. Therefore, the following three steps are taken to meet the purpose of this paper:

- Extant literature scanning
- Primary open-ended structured survey
- Propositions for future research.

### **3.2 Literature scanning**

‘Tourist destination images’ has been the concentration of study for the past 4 decades and not ‘tourism destination image’. The simple difference is of the usage of the word tourist and tourism. Tourist means just one actor whereas tourism can and will comprise of more than one actor. Echtner and Ritchie (1991, 1993) are amongst the pioneers in the field of destination image to break away from the piecemeal approach to holistic approach. Even then the focus of study was just on tourist alone. Hence, the tendency of destination image researchers since Hunt (1975) until Rittichainuwat (2001) seems to be inclined towards obtaining feedback from tourists alone based on structured survey questionnaires.

The strength of conducting a structured survey on tourist especially on the top revenue generating markets will allow the promoter to understand the needs and wants of the tourist to provide and improve the services required by tourists. Furthermore, with the right sampling techniques the results would be fairly reliable and statistically sound. On the other hand, if the attributes are simply plucked and fitted from secondary source to test for a different destination without taking into account that tourist from another part of the globe will be culturally different, for instance what is highly important and satisfying for an American tourist might not mean anything at all for a Japanese tourist. Thus, there is also a methodological issue that has to be considered.

Most researchers due to their prior training in certain domain have the tendency to hold strong to the belief system of that particular domain. But, the field of tourism is so volatile and dynamic that one particular domain will be unable to address issues related to tourism studies. It is very pleasing to observe that researchers like Markwick (2001) have moved on from totally relying on hypothetic-deductive approach to analysing the pictorial content of destination image. Jenkins (1999) highlights that a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach is desirable to capture a more holistic picture of destination image. One of the reasons why academic scholars avoid mixed method approach is due to the contradiction between the epistemology of deductive and inductive approach.

The reality in TDI studies requires a balance of these approaches. For instance, a market survey would be the best approach to capture large number of participants. On the other hand an in-depth interview might be required to understand the vision of a National Tourism Organisation. An observation technique would be suitable at an intermediary (e.g. tour operator) or focus group participation may be required at an initial stage to formulate attributes for a questionnaire design. Hence, a combination of the above is desirable to achieve totality in a TDI study. Ramachandran and Liu (2002) envisaged the Synergistic-Holism Paradigm, which allows interaction of mixed method approaches whereby the underlying philosophy of the paradigm, is that knowledge deserves priority over rules. In simple words, if there is a problem that requires results, there should not be hard and fast rules, but the process of finding this answer to the problem should take a flexible path whether it is qualitative, quantitative or a combination of both. Hence, the epistemology in writing this chapter is in line with the Synergistic Holism-Paradigm.

### **3.3 Primary open-ended structured survey**

The primary reason for conducting this survey is to identify not only the actors who are involved but to understand the interwoven network that acts as the operations mechanism in a TDI system. Furthermore, the attributes derived from this study could also be used to develop and design questionnaire to understand the British tourists' perspective of the host country they would visit.

A convenience sample (Cooper and Schindler, 1998) of 23 British respondents of a private organisation in the United Kingdom took part in this exercise. The respondents comprised of 12 males and 11 females who were in the age group of 20 to 50 years. The ranges of respondents were from full-time managers to sub-ordinates as well as part-time workers who are students, housewives or who holds a different permanent job elsewhere.

Four questions were asked; 1) How or where information was gathered prior to deciding on a destination choice? 2) What influences your destination/vacation choice? 3) If you have adequate resources and decide to go to the Far East, which destination would you choose? 4) How much are you willing to spend for your vacation on an annual basis (inclusive travel cost)?

The range for the willingness to spend for vacation on an annual basis varied from £600 to £2000. For part-time workers, their earnings were more like a bonus to add on to their household income. Hence, they are more liberal in spending when it comes to vacation in comparison to those who were solely dependent on their job. Students who worked on a part-time basis had the tendency to spend at mid-range. Tuition fees is virtually free, therefore students once after sorting out their living expenses have no further commitment and could spend around £1300 pounds on average. Family size affects the spending capacity. The bigger their family size, the lesser is spent on vacation. Hence, those with family commitment were in the lower-range of spending

power. Those in the managerial positions and whose marital statuses are single are the ones who fall in the higher range of spending.

Information source favoured by the respondents are as illustrated in Table 3.1. Print media which includes travel brochure, magazines/newspaper, library, tourist/travel guide was highlighted 24 times. Word of Mouth inclusive of friends in destination country, people who have been to destination before or just friends/relatives in general tallied to 24 counts in total. Internet and Website seem to gain more popularity as information source as it was highlighted 15 times. It is evident from the number of counts for travel agent that respondents are still very much dependent upon the traditional approach in seeking information prior to their travel. Other sources such as tour operators, information night, TV programmes and past experience were highlighted less frequently compared to other information channels. This should not be ignored or taken lightly since possibilities like regional difference even within the United Kingdom might occur on a traveller's preferred approach in his or her information seeking process.



**Table 3.1: Information gathered prior to deciding on destination choice**

#	INFORMATION SOURCE	Counts
1	Travel brochure	13
2	Friends in destination country	3
3	People who have been to destination before	9
4	Tour operators	2
5	Internet/website	15
6	Magazines/newspaper	3
7	Friends/relatives	7
8	Travel agent	12
9	Library	2
10	Tourist/travel guides (book)	6
11	Information night on destination organised by travel agent	1
12	TV programmes	3
13	Tourist information centre	1
14	Word of Mouth	5
15	Past experience	3

Table 3.2 is self explanatory in the sense that what influences the British tourist the most for them to choose a destination. The top two influencing factors, both with 17 counts are price and weather. In short, even a full time college student with a part-time job if offered a package worth £ 600 to a destination blessed with sun, sand, sea and beaches will be able to afford the travel. Nevertheless, what are more important are all the 45 attributes that have come out of just 23 respondents. This shows how complex the human nature is in their decision making process. Climate and price might be the top priority, but for competitive destination positioning from a marketer's point of view certain depth in creating the positive emotions, ambience and vibes would put a one's destination at a competitive advantage. Simply because, tangible and physical settings can be duplicated, it is the intangible that has to be evoked by the service providers.

**Table 3.2: What influence vacation/ destination choice**

#	DESTINATION INFLUENCE FACTORS	Counts
1	Feedback	5
2	Magazine	1
3	Word of Mouth	5
4	Brochures	1
5	Internet	1
6	Travel Agents	1
7	Budget (Price)	17
8	Weather	17
9	Food	2
10	Activities	4
11	Safety	1
12	Length of flight (distance)(time constraint or kids)	7
13	Accommodation	1
14	Film location	1
15	Availability	1
16	Advertisement	1
17	Holiday TV programmes	1
18	Family & Friends Recommendation	6
19	Political Cultural Perception/Stability	2
20	Family ages & Stages (children)	3
21	Beaches	5
22	Less crowded	1
23	Shops	1
24	Facilities	3
25	Not visited the country before	1
26	Travelling Companions Opinion	2
27	Knowledge of destination	1
28	Hygiene	1
29	History	2
30	Places of interest/attractions	3
31	Culture	3
32	Non commercialised - unspoilt environment	1
33	Architecture	1
34	Local lifestyle	1
35	Adventure	1
36	Sightseeing	2
37	Event/occasion	1
38	Destination reputation/image	2

39	Swimming pool	2
40	VFR	1
41	Alcohol price	1
42	Type of tourist at destination	1
43	Birds	1
44	Atmosphere	1
45	Nightlife	1

Since there's continuity of this study to the Far East, this chapter has included the question of preferred destination in the Far East and why the choice of that particular destination. Table 3.3 shows findings and without much surprise, out of the 15 destinations the respondents themselves named, Thailand (7 counts) appeared to be the most favoured destination mainly for the reason of value for money. Surprisingly the respondents without hiding their feelings or being embarrassed highlighted that fake goods, sex and drugs as the reason why they would want to visit the country. Some on the other hand was blunt enough to say that sex sells but Thailand is overdoing it, hence it appears to be either over-commercialised or an unsafe place to visit. Japan fell second to Thailand for its technological advancement and cultural difference. Hong Kong and Singapore had 4 counts each both mainly due to its liveliness and as a shopping paradise. At this point, an opportunity to highlight Synergistic Holism in practice arose when it came to Malaysia. Only two counts was on Malaysia, and out of that one respondent due to interaction with one of the researcher (a Malaysian) and the other respondent due to interaction with the same researcher as well as the TV promotional programme that was broadcasted chose Malaysia. The reason for highlighting this issue

is that if an inductive epistemology had been followed, then the structured questionnaire approach would not have been appropriate. On the other hand if a deductive approach had been followed then the interaction with the researcher would not have been appropriate. Hence, Synergistic Holism allowed me to use the situation and environment to gain knowledge of the truth and not just eliminate the possibility of the truth just to follow rules. The other destinations even just with 1 count should be considered seriously by the existing attractive markets, as its destination lifecycle matures these smaller markets will pose major threats.

**Table 3.3: Far East Choice? Destination**

#	Destination	Counts	Reason for choice
1	Thailand	7	Fake designer products, drugs, sex (2), food, transit (airport), Friends/Relative recommend(2), negative image(increasingly commercialised), history, culture, look good and cheap
2	Japan	6	Socio-culture, Hi-tech, IT, natural beauty, karate, Friends/Relative recommend, history, repeat visit, sights
3	Hong Kong	4	Culture, sightseeing, food, VFR, programmes, magazine, liveliness, shopping, media, filming
4	Singapore	4	Exotic, beaches, friendly people, tourism ad., transit(airport), Friends/Relatives recommend, different from Europe, programmes, magazine, liveliness, shopping,
5	Bali (Indonesia)	2	Scenery, weather, beach, sunshine, culture and unspoilt location
6	Malaysia	2	Researcher's influence (2), beaches, scenery, socio-cultural, recommendation, video/TV programme
7	Vietnam	2	History, Culture, Friends/Relatives recommend
8	Australia	1	VFR
9	Cambodia	1	History, Culture
10	China	1	History, Culture
11	India	1	No comments
12	Laos	1	Friends/Relatives recommend
13	Nepal	1	History, Culture

14	Sri Lanka	1	Culture, wildlife (elephant), green Countryside, beaches, friendly people
15	Tibet	1	History, Culture
	Total	35	

### 3.4 Propositions for Future TDI Research

The findings from the content analysis in the previous part has paved path in identifying the networks in association, which forms a total TDI system. All together 9 components have been distinctly identified. The nature of TDI is such that neither can these components function independently nor dependently. It requires one and the other, working inter-dependently to achieve totality in the TDI study. Therefore for future TDI studies the 9 components are delivered as 9 propositions to form the theoretical framework for a total TDI study.

#### 3.4.1 Sensory Proposition

With reference to Figure 3.1, verbal (Word of Mouth) and visual (print media) seemed to have the highest influence for respondents to base their decisions upon. There is a danger just to fall back on these two senses. Firstly, we are or for some of us are already in a knowledge society; globe has become smaller with Internet connection and information flow being faster than ever before. So can verbal and visual alone be appealing to the eyes and ears of a potential tourist? Horowitz (1970) interpreted that one-third of the respondents were visualisers, another third verbalisers and a quarter were 'imageless'. The imageless respondents knew something was going on but did not

know what lead to that representation of thought. (The remaining respondents were mixed). Richardson (1999) defines imagery (images) as a sum of human sensory, which includes seeing (visual), hearing (auditory), smell (olfactory), taste (gustatory), touch (coetaneous), movement (kinaesthetic) and different bodily sensations (organic). Hence, it is worthwhile to have a focus group or in-depth interview with potential tourist to understand if these other senses actually lack attention and is this part is what is meant by aura, being exotic and unique atmosphere?

### **3.4.2 Inter-domain Proposition**

TDI study can't run away from marketing, economics, geography, socio-psychology etc. Thus, to hold on strong to just one principal field and ignoring others wouldn't do any good to achieve a total TDI results. As of when and where required, these domains should be allowed to create fusion.

### **3.4.3 Service Propositions**

Service is the softer side of the TDI. It's intangible and has to be dealt carefully because this is what would make or break the success of a destination. Thus, maintaining service quality and assessing it on a regular basis would help to improve the service delivery. Hence, a questionnaire-based approach to obtain tourist feedback would be a good practice.

#### **3.4.4 Tangible (Attractions/Facility) Proposition**

This would be of something that a potential tourist can visualise, because either an attraction or facility, it is something physical and this would allow the tourist to benchmark and compare the standards with their own. Hence, false claims from the promotional side could only do more damage than be truthful and to say that we are still in the process of developing. As listed in figure 3.2, these attributes can be asked in a questionnaire survey to the tourists.

#### **3.4.5 Actors Proposition**

The reason for highlighting actors in TDI is to emphasise that TDI does not mean tourist alone. The whole supply chain from travel agent, tour operator, regional NTO, policy-makers all are actors involved in the study of TDI. A survey approach might be only suitable for the tourist. An observational approach might be required at a travel agency and an in-depth interview might be required with a policy maker. Therefore, a balance has to be achieved with these actors in TDI.

#### **3.4.6 Methodological/Philosophical Proposition**

Due to the complex nature of TDI, the inter-domain approach adapted and the mixed-method applied, a strong epistemology is required to carry out a TDI study. Hence, a flexible epistemology that allows interaction amongst various worldviews is desired against any forms of philosophies that emphasises on rules over reality.

### **3.4.7 Technology Proposition**

Knowledge society is the future society. Hence, investing and learning on how to take advantage of the Information Computer Technology world will be beneficial for TDI promotion in the future. The ICT platform requires further research especially from an end-users perspective. Learning the advantages of ICT can be useful to further enhance future TDI business.

### **3.4.8 Managerial/Policy Proposition**

Policy, managerial and government stability is something anyone would look for. Safety comes first before pleasure. Political stability is an external factor, which can't be controlled by promotion boards or travel agencies. It is something to watch out for carefully and hope for the best that no turmoil arises. As researchers, it is the words of politician, the media and if lucky, interviews with politicians that would give us a rough picture on the present and the future direction of tourism image in specific and national image as whole. Anyhow, there are other issues like the social policies for instance, access for disabled, mothers with young babies and other types of tourist who requires assistance to be considered. If a destination doesn't have these facilities in place, probably they would be losing out to their competitors who are better equipped. This, type of issues has to be raised by researchers to the respective authorities to heighten the facilities and service provided.

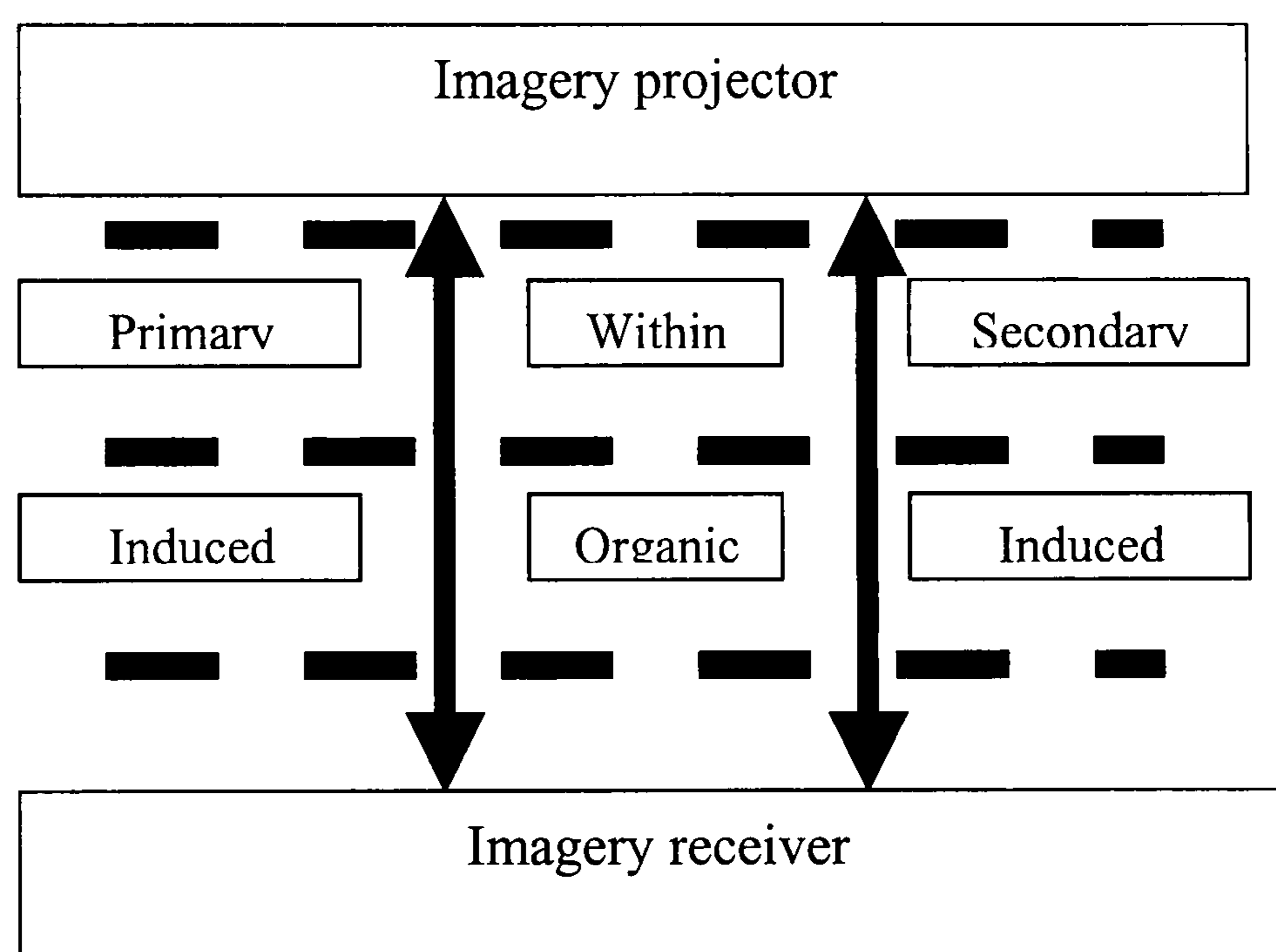


### 3.4.9 Intermediary (Sectors) Proposition

Intermediary just does not involve actors; it involves different organisations, different industries and even different sectors. For instance, tourism needs the support of the airline and hospitality industries on top of their NTO's, tour operators and travel agents. Hence, when conducting a TDI study, it would be worthwhile to incorporate these organisations in our research process be it directly or indirectly.

These 9 propositions are general guidance to formulate a framework to study TDI in totality. Drawing from the conceptual framework of the six elements in the previous chapter and the 9 propositions of this chapter, occurrences of gaps in destination imagery is identified between the imagery projector and imagery receiver as per figure 3.1 below.

**Figure 3.1 Destination imagery gap**



The vertical double pointed arrows indicates the two way imagery flow between the projectors and receivers while the horizontal broken lines explains of the gaps that

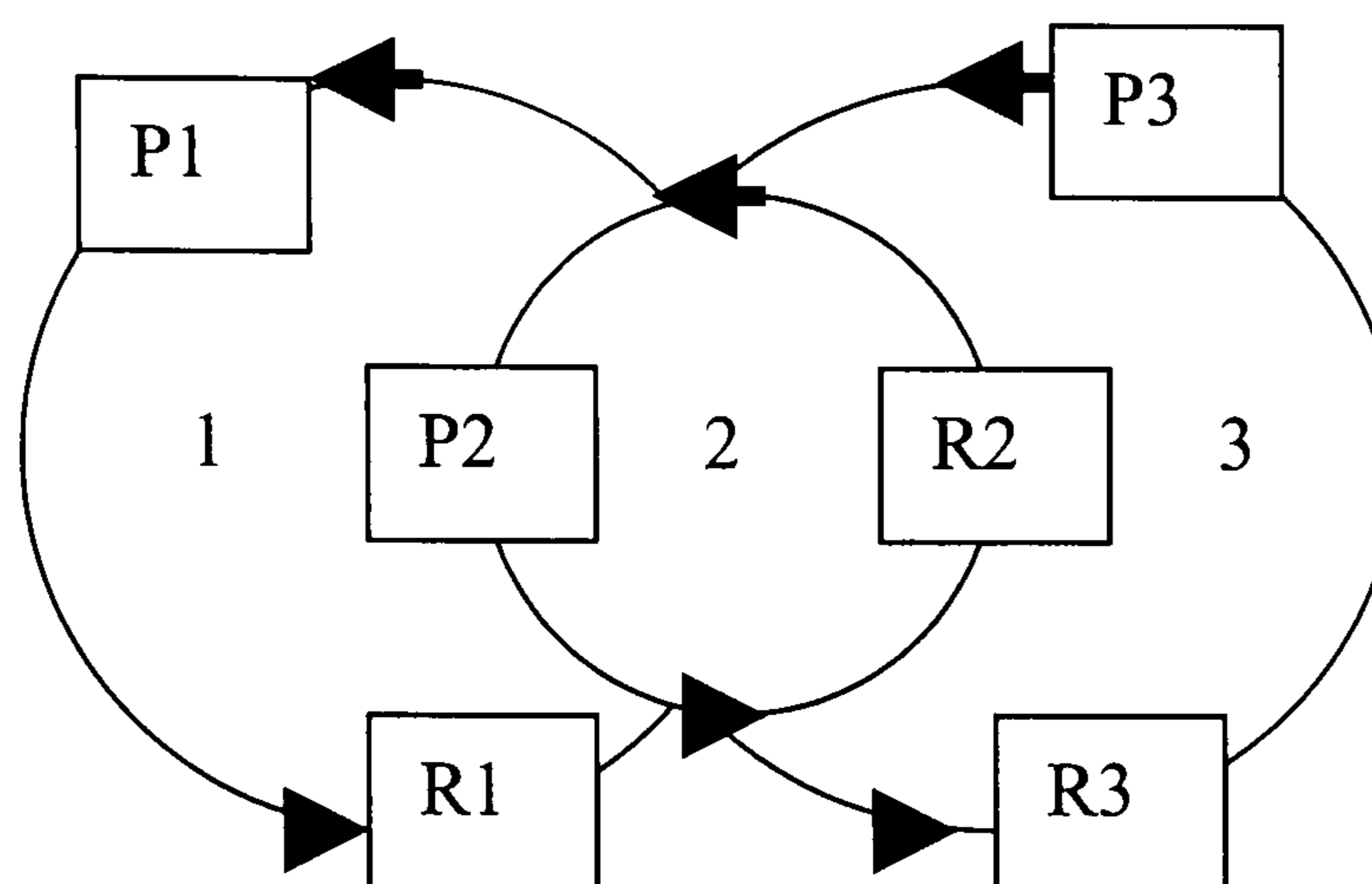
exists between the interaction of imagery between the projectors and the receivers. The small boxes within the imagery flow diagram shows of the existence of primary and secondary imagery projections and recipients coupled with the induced and organic types of imagery that exist within this framework. The many folds of imagery gaps derived from both the literature review chapter and the exploratory study as discussed above unveils the complexity of this imagery issue.

The primary projector or the source is where the imagery comes from, for instance the policy makers' (i.e. 7<sup>th</sup> Malaysian Plan) imagery target of making Malaysia's tourism image as meeting/exhibition/incentive/convention (MICE) or a nature tourism attraction. Hence the imagery receiver who eventually would put these policies into practice most likely will be the NTOs/DMOs like the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board. On a different note, this receiver (MTPB) will then turn into the secondary imagery projector especially to the travel agents and tour operators who will become the receivers. The chain reaction continues down the line until it receives the consumer.

However, the imagery flow is just not a one-way traffic between the projector and receiver. There exist loops of intermingling systems (Figure 3.2) that provide feedback to one and the other. Hence, the receiver can become the projector and vice-versa. A simple explanation to this is the reverse of the chain-reaction where the travel agent/tour operator gains feedback from the consumer and try to accommodate to the needs, wants and demands of the clients, so now, the NTO will have to please the

agents/operators to be in their good books, and obviously the policy makers need feedback from the NTO prior to formalising a policy.

**Figure 3.2 Visualisation of loops of intermingling systems**



Not only is the interaction of these imagery projectors and receiver applicable on bilateral direction but a multi-dimension interaction. As per figure 3.5, firstly let's assume that 1, 2 and 3 are standalone systems with P1, P2 and P3 are the projectors of each system and R1, R2 and R3 are receivers of the respective systems. On a bilateral relationship, the explanation is rather straightforward for instance if system one comprises of tour operator and tourist, from one angle, the operator will be the projector inducing the images to the tourists (receiver) and on a reverse note, the tourist will project the images that will satisfy them through their feedback to the operator who becomes a receiver now.

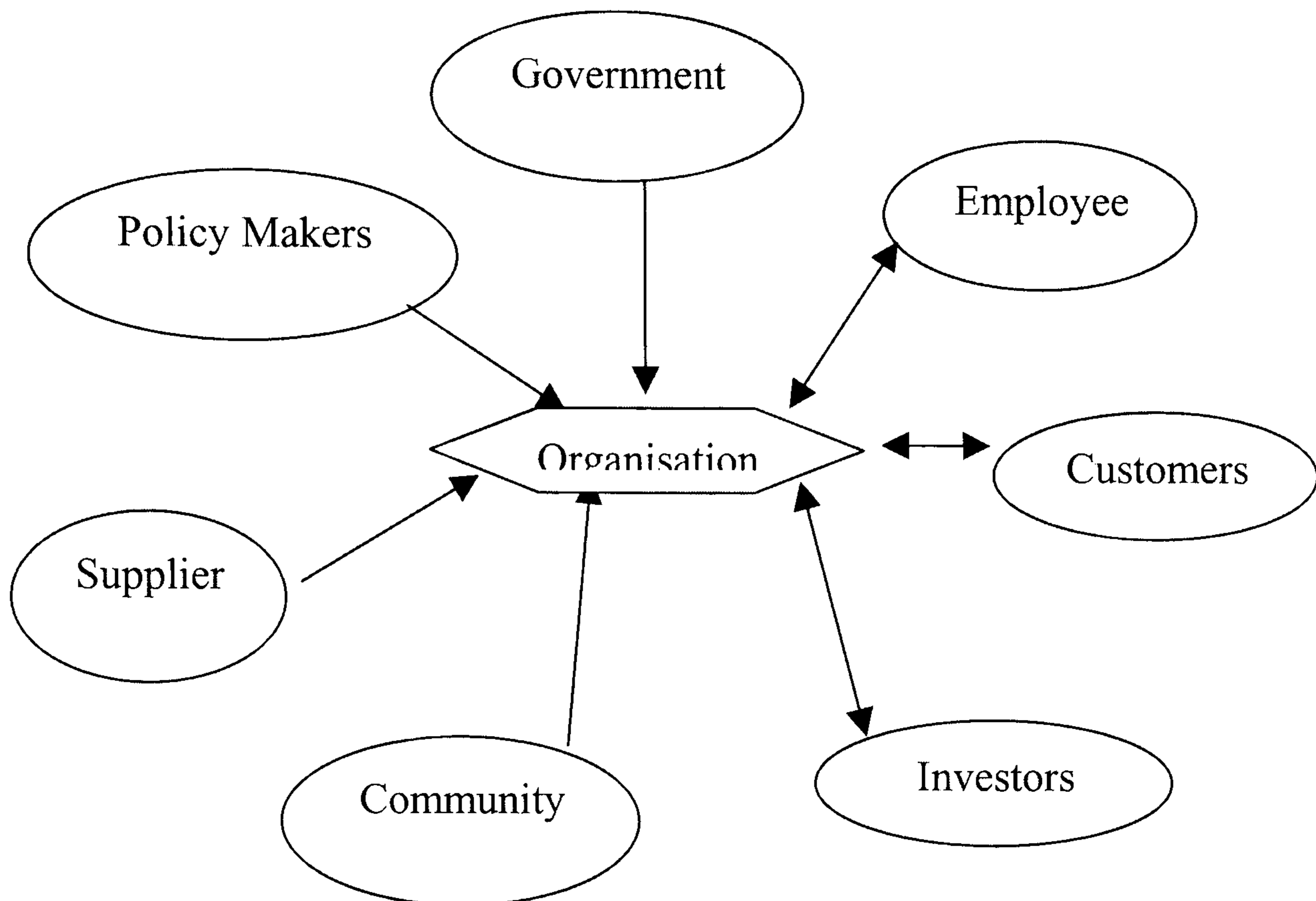
However the gaps that exist and that has to be addressed are when these systems intermingle. How many systems are there and how these interactions take place -

diagonally, vertically, horizontally, or laterally? These are the gaps that have to be addressed. For instance, the interaction is not always that straightforward. So far, the imagery projector and receiver have just been discussed between the various actors. Intermingling of systems also take place between actors and domain, domain and sectors, sectors and actors and so on and so forth. In, the midst of these also exist the organic image whereby the projector and the receiver can be of the same entity (within). For instance, form the collection of life experiences how a potential tourist may project an image upon himself/herself (receiver) of a destination. These are all amazingly complex and complicated. Hence, the appropriate platform to execute such framework is required and the approach that suited best to address the above issues is systems thinking.

### **3.5 Systems Thinking as Operational Framework for Imagery Study**

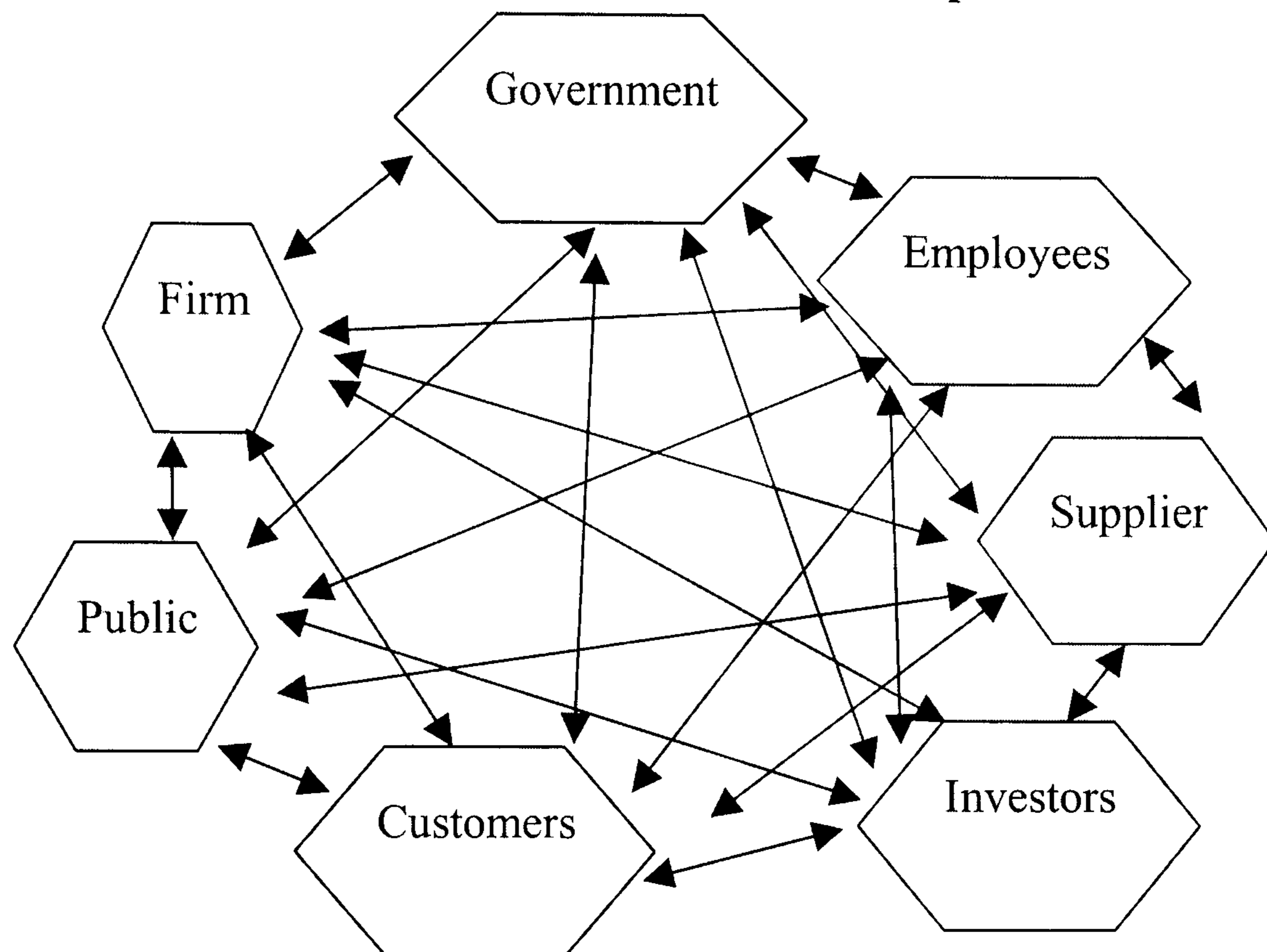
System speaks of set of arrangement of things related or connected as to form a unity (Neufeldt, 1997) that interacts within an organisation or between organisations (Emanuel, 2000). Systems however can be viewed from two different angles (Werhane, 2002); a standard system framework as per figure 3.3 or a networked systems framework as per figure 3.4.

**Figure 3.3 Systems from a standard standpoint**



The complexity of interaction as discussed earlier not only exists between actors but from an inter-dimensional interaction in destination imagery. Hence, the standard approach that allows only a bilateral interaction (Figure 3.3) between organisations would not suit to address the gaps of this thesis.

**Figure 3.4 Systems from a network standpoint**



As prescribed by Wolf (1999) and further supported by Werhane (2002), a complex situation like the study of destination imagery requires a truly systemic view. A truly systemic view in order to address the gaps that arise in the imagery system, hence involves interactions extending over time, a complex set of interrelated decision points, an array of actors with conflicting interests and a number of feedback loops. The above prescription fits the equation of answering the gaps that have occurred in this thesis. To start with, whatever organisation, domains, sector or actors we speak of constitutes of people- human being. Hence these networks of association as per figure 3.7, while representing different systems, actually study the relationship of these people representing each system.

And to achieve the above, a multi-perspective system's thinking (Mitroff and Linstone, 1993) analysing the destination imagery phenomenon, subsystems and systems are required. And at least three different perspectives consisting of different worldviews (ontology and epistemology) to scrutinise and challenge each other's philosophical stance to obtain a holistic picture of the imagery system and to address the gaps have to be executed. Hence referring back to figure 3.6, the networks in association that constitutes of the proposition of the exploratory research and conceptual framework of chapter 2 will be addressed in this thesis to close on the gaps that occurs in the destination imagery systems, namely for the case of Malaysia's destination imagery from a British perspective. At one point or the other the following research process and analysis chapters will address these associations of network as in figure 3.7. For instance a positivist view is adapted in understanding the meaning and measurement of the tourists (customers) and the travel advisers (firm, suppliers). On the other hand, an interpretivist's view through in-depth interviewing and discourse analysis is adapted to address the association between government, firms, employees and suppliers. A structuralism view is also taken in assessing the semiotics of imagery through the assessment of pictorial and textual content of dossiers which provides discussion not only on the beautiful sceneries but also provides a deeper structure of meaning from investors and the locals view point.

The greater challenge though is on how to integrate these different worldviews in a research arena where a positivist and interpretivist don't see eye to eye. The school of

thought and the philosophical underpinnings are so contrasting that even the attempts of merging had barely been only at the technical level of a mixed method approach of qualitative and quantitative analysis but not at the level of philosophical underpinnings.

The following chapter on research process hence, explains how the British doctorate system (Baum, 1998) through close supervision and that is solely examined on the dissertation as compared to other system where the thesis is only a partial requirement has provided the right ingredient for me as a doctorate candidate to explore, challenge, investigate and merge the philosophical underpinnings. The British system though criticised for not being structured hence resulting in fewer successful PhD candidates, should be seen from a knowledge building angle where the British system provides the independence to dwell into the breadth and depth of the subject matter studied. It is not a doctorate in business administration or doctorate in education; it is a doctorate in philosophy, hence a successful candidate that will be awarded a doctorate in philosophy should at least mention a few words on the philosophical underpinning of the dissertation, hence the following chapter is dedicated to the research philosophy of this thesis.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH PROCESS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Instead of naming this chapter research methodology, I find comfort in naming it as research process as to my understanding the research methodology appears to be just one component in the research process. The spectrum of the research process has to be understood first, if any effort is to be made to make tourism to be recognised as a discipline of its own and not merely to be seen as a sub-set of other disciplines. This revelation of the research process for me was possible mainly due to the research methods course conducted by the university coupled with the pilot study carried out. Thus drawing from these two sources, I shall write on the research process. Firstly, understanding the various worldviews and secondly creating a fusion between these worldviews that acts as a platform to carry out consequent empirical studies. This research process chapter's main aim is to provide the synergy amongst philosophical underpinnings to carry out the operational framework (chapter 3) that requires interaction of different worldviews. However, prior to addressing the philosophical investigation for tourism destination imagery, the philosophical journey that took me to arrive at the point of philosophical investigation will be looked into first.

## **4.2 The Philosophical Journey**

The purpose of this section is to provide clarity in pursuing a research and to explore the mechanisms that provide stabilising effect to sustain the research focus. Although the general discussion cuts across all levels of research, my focus is on the PhD research with an emphasis in the field of tourism as to the area I am pursuing my PhD degree.

My decision to write on the topic of research philosophy prior to addressing the philosophical investigation is to address the importance of understanding how (from which perspective) I view the research question. It is of utmost essence to determine this perspective as to avoid going astray in conducting a focused research.

Therefore, the nature of discussion to bring forth the questions very often a researcher has, will be presented in the following manner:

- The thought process a researcher experiences
- What is research philosophy, why is it important and how can research philosophy assist a researcher to keep oneself in track to achieve a research objective
- Upon understanding the various perspectives, to examine and assess the various approaches that can be taken to address the research question.
- Finally, given the example of tourism, why I chose a certain paradigm compared to another in pursuing my PhD degree.

Firstly, it would be of great assistance to know the thought process experienced by a PhD candidate before arriving at a research theme. Although the following process is an example of my experience in arriving at this research theme, it is worthwhile viewing it as a case to derive the common problems a researcher would face. First and foremost, personal interest in studying tourist destination image motivated me to embark on this topic. Upon investigation, it seemed as though other researchers have explored every aspect of this topic.

This left me with two choices (quick drastic measure – easy way out); either to choose a different topic or try to pick and mix a few different disciplines i.e. IT + tourism + ... +.... Discussion with supervisor and attending research seminars created awareness for research at PhD level. At this point I realised that it should be a phase of expanding both the depth and breadth of a subject matter. Thus, an inner compass is needed. This will be the building block of a research and academic career. Hence, I was convinced to carry out the study on destination image. In the light of my new enthusiasm, I conducted a more extensive literature search. Having trained in marketing it was only natural for me to focus on marketing approach, but what I did not realise was the fundamentals, which will eventually bring forth the marketing strategy. The second phase of realisation occurred upon my supervisor's advice on my theoretical framework. The supervisor's advice was to look at the main two interacting aspects of destination image; the process (tourist driven) and the mechanism (definition/meaning driven). It is

important at this point to say that all these while, I had been looking at both (process and mechanism) these aspects, but were unable to crystallise my thoughts.

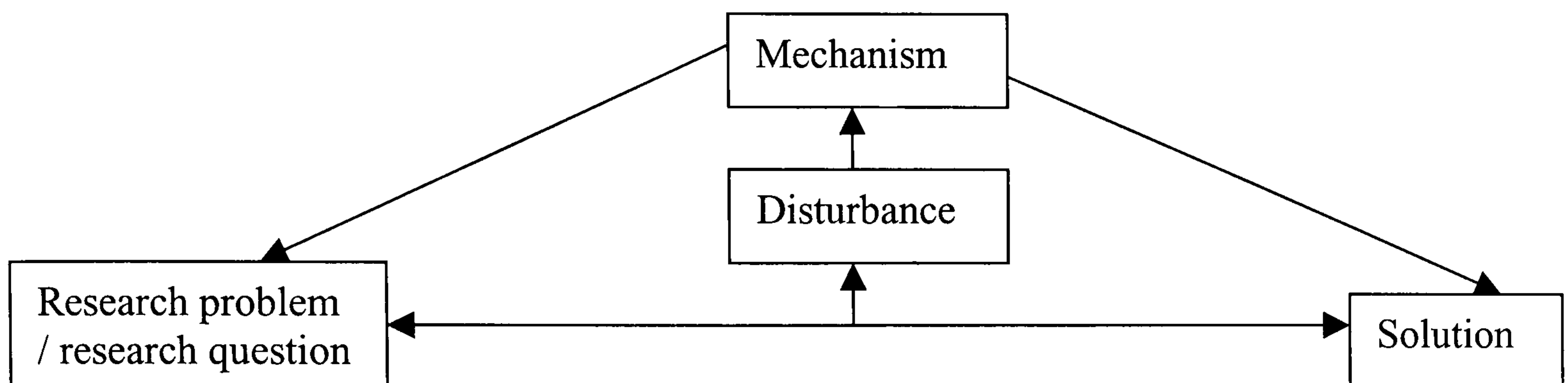
This understanding generated by my supervisor acted as a catalyst to further review the literature from a new perspective. The next part will explain on how I had developed my thoughts, giving evidence of existing gap in the study of imagery in tourism. It is my hope at this stage that, a consensus with my supervisor can be reached on my research topic for me to further embark on my journey towards a PhD degree.

The gist of the above thought process can be spelt out as follows:

- What techniques should I use in conducting the research – this question can be very dangerous as to very often the researcher would manipulate the research question to match the most suitable technique he/she is comfortable with.
- Upon deciding on the research theme, should I use qualitative or quantitative measures to conduct my research?
- In addressing my research theme, there are so many global problems that I would like to solve. In terms of time and funding, it might not be feasible, because the PhD itself might take probably ten years to complete, or the research questions addressed is worth of conducting four to five PhDs.

Hence, a solution is required to conduct a focused research both in terms of knowledge contribution as well as feasibility of the study. Thus, the researcher is solely responsible

in managing a PhD research. How to manage it, will be the next stage of discussion that will introduce the equilibrium mechanism. The figure below describes that:



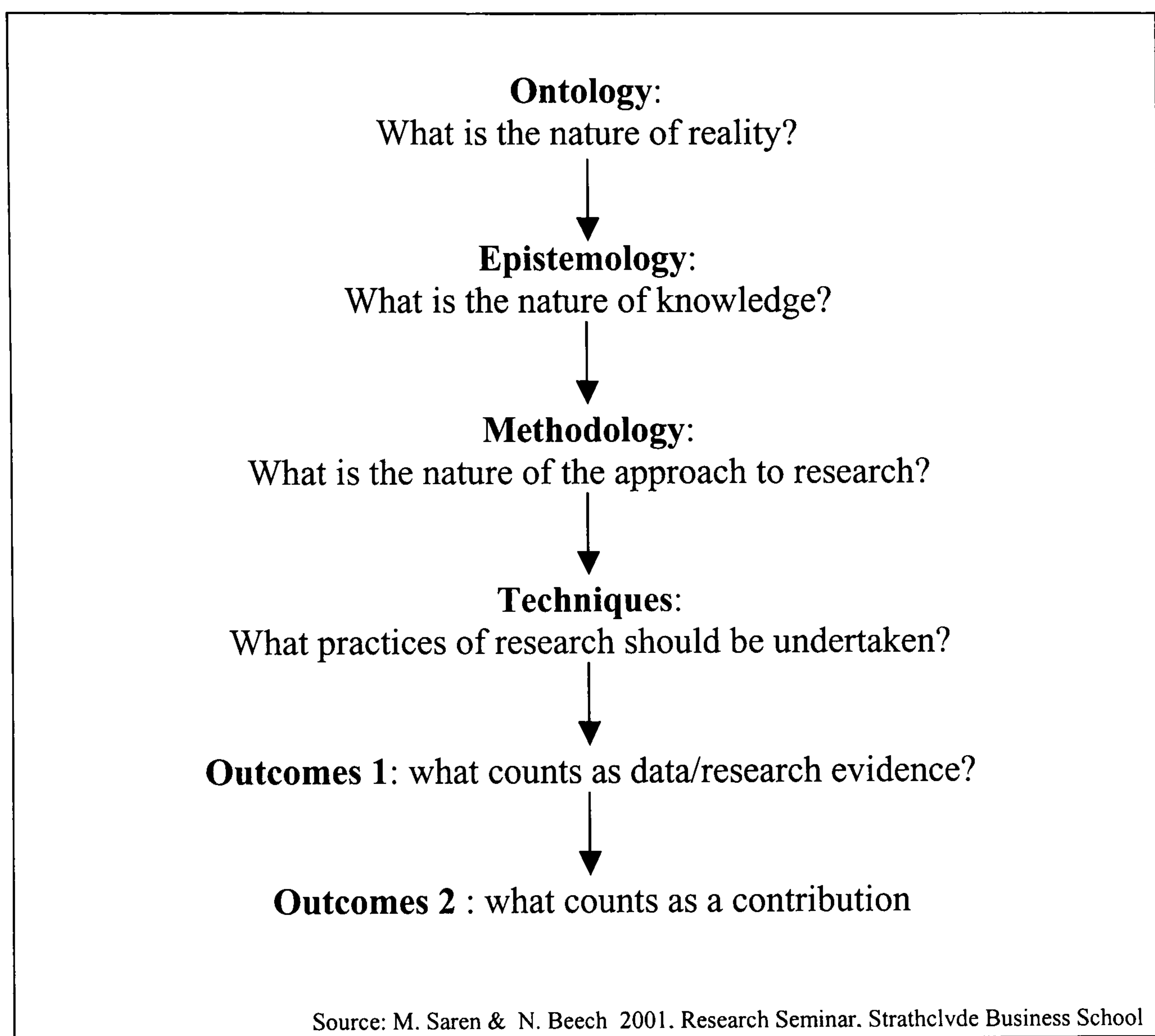
**Figure 4.1 A research equilibrium concept**

1. There is a research question where a solution will be at the end of the journey. The process of arriving at the solution itself will be a guiding principle, which gives the equilibrium.
2. Very often, researchers, as addressed above have complexity in their thought process, which is shown in the diagram as disturbance.
3. Once, this disturbance occur, a mechanism will act as a catalyst to bring back this equilibrium either by directing the researcher to the research question or the solution which is the final goal of the research journey.

The equilibrium mechanism is the research philosophy. What is research philosophy; why is it important and how research philosophy assist a researcher to keep oneself in track to achieve a research objective will be addressed next? Research philosophy acts as a mechanism to assist researchers to scope the field of study. The philosophy helps

the researcher to understand how he or she views the nature of reality; and upon understanding the nature of reality, guides the researcher to answer one of the fundamental questions: what is the nature of knowledge? The knowledge tree diagram below illustrates some of the fundamental concepts, terms and meanings of research philosophy and it's hierarchy as a guiding principle in conducting a focused research.

**Figure 4.2 Knowledge tree**

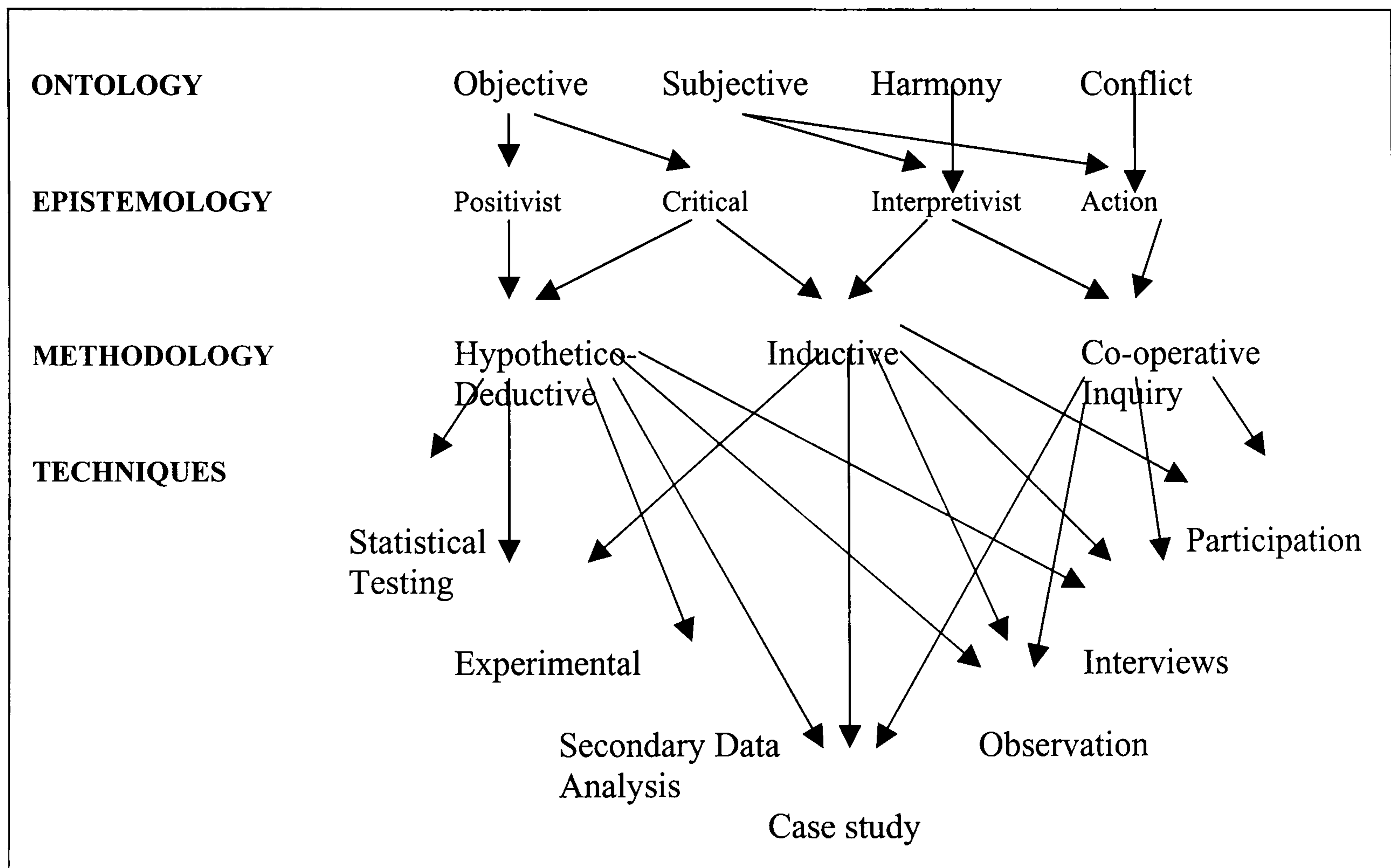


It is important to highlight at this point, that many or most of the PhD candidates, very often begin their research inquiry from either the techniques or methodology phase of

the knowledge tree. Having taken the bottom to top approach instead of the top down approach, a researcher faces many problems as mentioned in the earlier part of this discussion (i.e. should I use a qualitative or quantitative technique).

Thus, understanding the research philosophy mechanism allows a researcher to address and conduct a research in a focused manner. Knowing without understanding the bombastic terms like ontology and epistemology alone can't be of much help if the characteristics of these terms are not explained. Hence, the description of the characteristics will be based upon the following diagram:

**Figure 4.3 Research process – philosophy to technique**



Ontology – or how reality is perceived can be divided into 4 categories. The first type known as objective reality rejects the notion ‘ truth is in the eyes of the beholder’. According to objective reality, truth always remains the same irrespective of the observer. Hence, a researcher who is a follower of the objective ideology believes in set rules, existing laws and theories and normally would not challenge the fundamentals of existing reality. The second category on the contrary, supports the notion ‘truth is in the eyes of the beholder’. Hence, the believe system of subjective reality says there is no absolute law and its’ aim is to understand and interpret people’s perception. The third and fourth category that is harmony and conflict contradicts one another with the believers of the former views reality in totality as peaceful except for pockets of instability compared to the latter that is vice-versa. Therefore, it is important for me to know how I perceive reality because this will lead to the next question in determining the nature of knowledge (epistemology).

Epistemology can be divided into four paradigms and the function of each paradigm is to zoom in on how an inquiry about knowledge can be made in relation to the chosen ontology. Assuming, the researcher has chosen the objective category in the ontological selection, this will pave the path to either the positivist or critical paradigm. If subjective reality were the researches ontological choice, then the epistemological paradigm would be either interpretivist or action as shown in the above diagram. The epistemological position taken will reveal in which methodology spectrum a researcher



will fall into: objective or subjective. The term methodology used here does not refer to the qualitative or quantitative method (this would be discussed later as techniques used) used for data analysis, but three divisions can be derived from it; hypothetico-deductive, inductive, co-operative inquiry.

Basically, the hypothetico-deductive relates to a strong objective spectrum whereby the attributes includes factual and measurement of concepts via large sampling. In contrary, inductive and co-operative inquiry falls into strong subjective spectrum whereby their attributes are focusing on meanings via investigating in-depth small samples. Thus, the choice of objectivity will lead a researcher to the usage of quantitative techniques such as statistical testing and secondary data analysis compared to subjectivity that will use techniques like interviews and observation.

Explaining these terms and its' functions without analysing it with real life situation doesn't provide much clarity. Thus, my PhD's theme is examined. In order to examine, a few assumptions based upon the research theme are derived as follows:

- Destination image has been studied for over 3 decades and yet destinations fail to portray an attractive image
- The pre-90's era is very objective oriented (refer table 4.1) – every research objective has been to measure rather than to understand and interpret people's meaning of image

**Table 4.1 Snapshot of destination imagery studies**

Reference	Objective	Definition	Methodology	Technique for the generation of attributes
Hunt(1975)	To measure the images of four states; Utah, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming	Perceptions held by potential visitors about an area	Structured: - 20 attributes - 7 and 5 point Sem.Diff. Scale	- Tourism experts - Researcher's judgement
Crompton (1977)	To measure the image of Mexico	Organised representations of a destination in a cognitive system	Structured: - 18 attributes - 7 point Sem.Diff. Scale	- General reading material/brochures - Consumer interviews (N = 36)
Goodrich (1977)	To measure the image of nine destinations: Florida, Hawaii, Mexico, California and five Caribbean Islands	Not defined	Structured: - 10 attributes - 7 point Likert Scale	- Tourism experts - Travel brochure
Crompton (1979)	To measure the image of Mexico in different states of the United States	Sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination	Structured: - 30 attributes - 7 point Sem. Diff. Scale	- General reading material/brochures - Consumer interviews (N = 36)
Pearce (1982)	To measure the pre-travel and post travel images of seven countries	Not defined	Structured - 13 attributes - 6 point Likert Scale	Modified Kelly Repertory Grid Technique (N = 10)
Haahiti & Yavas (1983)	To measure the image of Finland (twelve countries were included in the survey)	Not defined	Structured - 10 attributes - 9 point Likert Scale	- Literature review - Focus group of travel agents
Crompton & Duray (1985)	To measure the image of Texas (while testing alternative approaches to important-performance analysis	Not defined	Structured - 28 attributes - 5 point Sem. Diff. Scale	- General reading material/brochures - Consumer interviews (N = 100)

Kale & Weir (1986)	To measure the image of India	Not discussed	Structured: - 26 attributes - 7 point Likert Scale	- Not discussed
Phelps (1986)	To measure pre-travel and post-travel images of Menorca	Perceptions or impressions of a place	Structured: - 32 attributes - Checklist of attributes	- Researchers' judgement
Tourism Canada (1986-1989)	To measure the image of Canada in various major tourism generating markets	How a country is perceived relative to others	Structured: - 29 attributes - 5 point Likert Scale	- Not discussed
Gartner & Hunt (1987)	To measure the change in Utah's image over a 12 year period.	Impressions that a person ...holds about a state in which they do not reside	Structured: - 11 Attributes - 5 point Sem. Diff. Scale	- Tourism Experts - Researchers' Judgement
Richardson & Crompton (1988)	To explore differences in images held of USA and Canada between French and English Canadians	Perceptions of vacation attributes	Structured - 10 Attributes - 4 point Comparative Scale	- Used attributes from Tourism Canada Vacation Patterns Survey
Gartner (1989)	To measure the images of four states : Utah, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming( utilising multi-dimensional scaling technique)	A complex combination of various products and associated attributes	Structured: - 15 Attributes - 5 Point Likert Scale	- Not discussed
Calantone et. Al. (1989)	To measure the images of eight Pacific Rim countries held by tourists from various countries of origin	Perceptions of potential tourist destinations	Structured: - 13 Attributes - 7 Point Likert Scale	- Not discussed
Reily (1990)	To measure the image of Montana	Not individual traits...but the total impressions an entity makes	Unstructured - open-ended questions	- Not applicable

- Post-90 showed some inquiry on the meaning of destination image, but the tendency to examine image objectively remained as the favourite approach, which again brought the vicious cycle of failing to portray a successful destination image
- Thus, the questions of defining image in a tourism context arise. Has there been sufficient effort to truly define the meaning of images?

Having made the above assumptions, the author has arrived to the following research objectives:

- Explore the surrounding variables (external and internal environment) of imagery
- Identify the systems involved in destination imagery, and finally
- Bring forward a systemic approach for future destination imagery research.

Analysing the above assumptions and objectives of research in a nutshell, coupled with the discussion of earlier chapter on which the fusion of philosophical underpinnings are required, the right philosophical ingredient was felt required, hence the next section will embark on the journey of philosophical investigation to provide a solution.

### **4.3 Philosophical Investigation – Synergistic Holism**

Construction, deconstruction and reconstruction are the basis of undertaking this study. TDI studies since the 1970's vastly borrow theory and models from various disciplines mainly marketing (Telisman-Kosuta 1989), sociology (Cohen 1988), anthropology (Kaplan 1996), geography (Cater 2001), psychology (Potter 1988), economics (Papatheodorou 2001) and history (Towner 1988). The concept of TDI is evolving, dynamic, volatile and uncertain. Yet tourism seems to be one of the major economic contributors to nations especially the emerging economies. Having said the complex nature of tourism coupled with the various disciplines employing their own techniques in addressing such issues, TDI issues till to date have been addressed in a less holistic nature with exception to Echtner and Ritchie (1991,1993). Even then, the tendency to fall back on a particular approach seems to be favoured by most researchers either due to the background they are trained in or as Oppermann (2000) puts it a convenient way to get papers published.

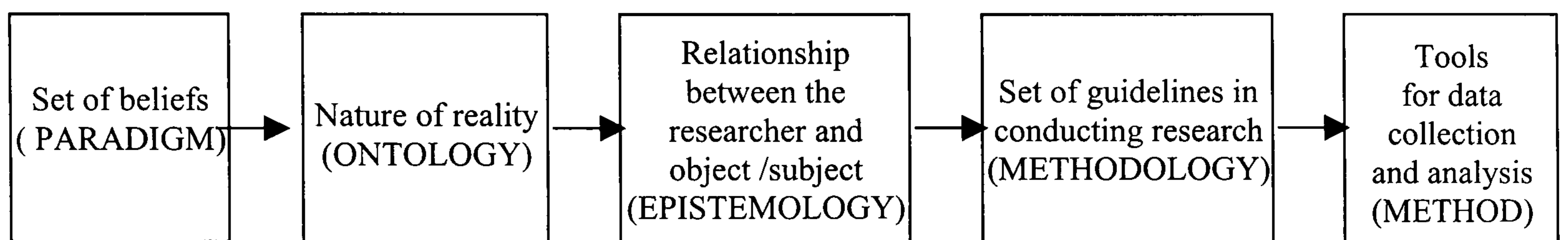
This section, hence, intends to reveal and review the underlying facts of how researchers engage themselves in addressing a research issue, mainly TDI for the purpose of this chapter, and what could be the possible factors for the researchers in choosing a certain approach.

The process of review and reveal that I have taken is as follows: First, to briefly revisit what are the various research methods (construction phase) available and what are the underlying philosophies if certain approach is employed. Secondly, to review the pattern of the extant TDI research and to classify (deconstruct) them into the research paradigm they belong to. Finally, to arrive at a proposition (reconstruction) for future TDI studies. Hence, the aim of this section is to review the extant construct of TDI, deconstruct the applicability and finally reconstruct an approach to conduct a TDI study.

#### **4.3.1 Construction: Revisit available research methods and uncover the underlying philosophies if certain approach is employed**

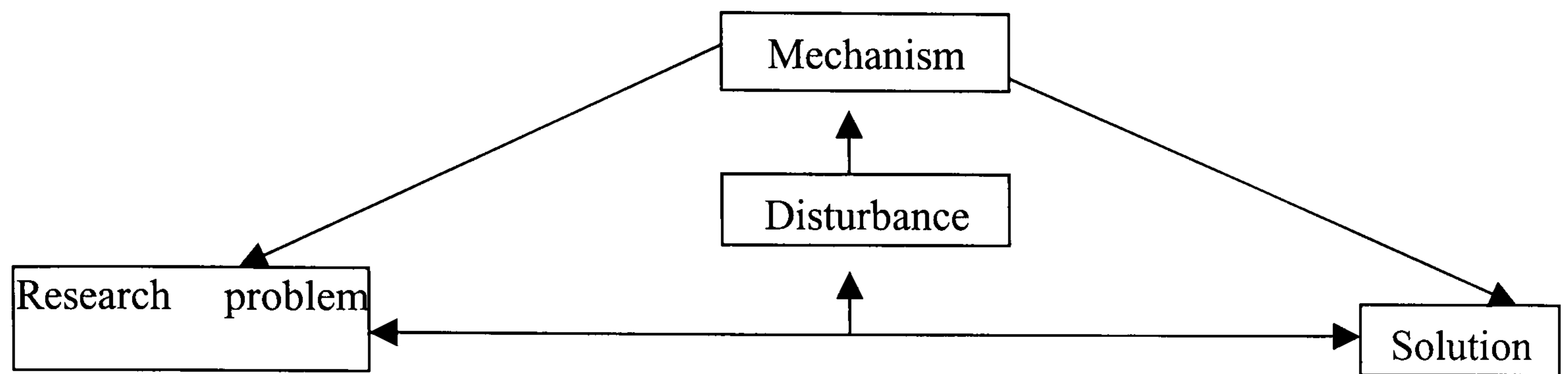
Researchers often plunge into techniques of conducting a research instead of reasoning the basis of conducting the research. One of the many reasons could be due to the subject specialisation a researcher might hold. Dann (1988) in his review of *Annals of Tourism Research* and *Journal of Leisure Research* identifies 16 different academic origins of tourism researchers who have published in the above-mentioned journals. Multi-dimensional view is healthy but insufficient for future implication if fusion amongst these disciplines is not employed. The research and practice implication of unitary approach will deny the progress of tourism to be recognised, as a field of its own, instead would be referred to as a sub-set of economics, sociology, marketing, etc.

Adding on to the complication is the philosophy, which underlies beneath the techniques and methods. Research philosophy (Jennings, 2001) as in Figure 4.4 in brief explains the set of beliefs (paradigm) a researcher holds, how the nature of reality is perceived (ontology), the researcher’s relationship with the subject or object to be researched which draws out the guidelines (methodology) and technique (method) to conduct the research. Jennings further elaborates 6 different paradigms (positivism, interpretive social sciences, critical theory, feminist perspective, post-modernism and chaos theory) for the purpose of tourism research.



**Figure 4.4 The Paradigm-Method Relationship**

The benefit of having certain set of belief is that it provides a checking mechanism (Figure 4.5) throughout conducting a research. Another benefit mainly for academicians who are daunted with the ‘publish or perish’ notion (Oppermann 2000) is to find similar groups with the same set of beliefs (i.e. research groups, academic journals, editorial boards), so commonality is found for survival.



**Figure 4.5 Philosophies for Research Equilibrium**

However, the challenges of holding on to a certain set of belief are to face the criticism from the opposing worldviews. The major concerns in abiding to a certain philosophical camp and undermining the other will give rise to a situation where rules are given priority to reality. Hence, the research tools used may be restricted as a consequence of following a specific worldview. To understand better, an imaginary comparison of the different paradigms employed to the study of TDI is illustrated below (Table 4.2):



**Table 4.2 Comparisons of Paradigms for TDI Research**

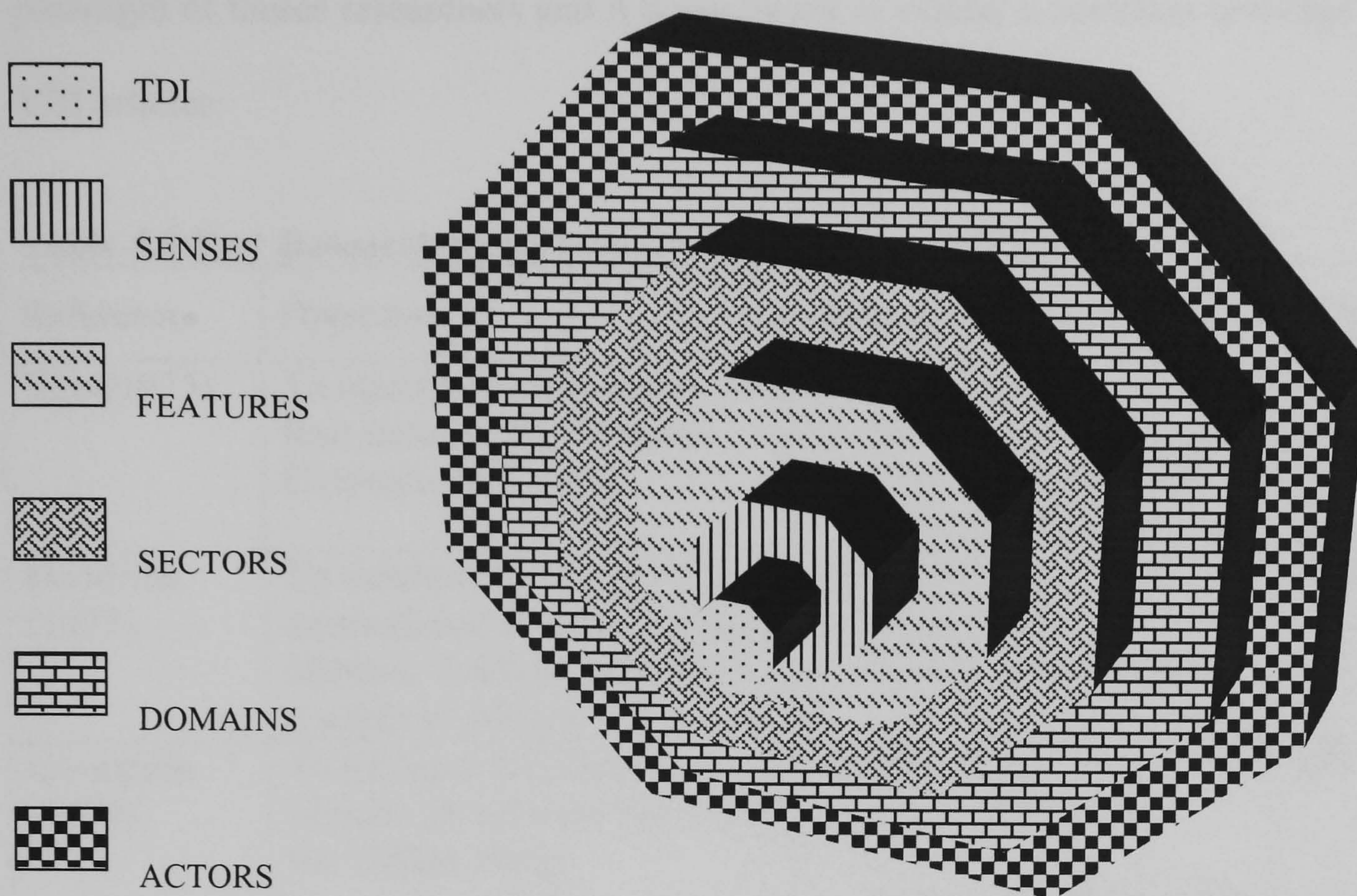
Paradigm	Description	Aim/Objective	Camp
Positivist	Linear causal relationship	To measure TDI	Deductive
Interpretive Social Sciences	Theory building	Elicit the meaning of TDI	Inductive
Critical Theory	Freedom for minority	TDI of the disabled	Inductive
Feminist	Emphasis on feminism	Understand the TDI of women	Inductive
Post-Modern	Deconstruct	Deconstruction of TDI	Inductive
Chaos Theory	Non-linear dynamic relationship	Factoring the TDI anomalies	Deductive

At the very basics, the philosophy is viewed as two camps (Finn, 2000): phenomenology (inductive) and positivist (deductive). This duality itself raises the question of being holistic. Besides the nature of TDI being relativistic, dynamic, complex and multiple (Gallarza 2002) what should not be ignored is the question of why in the first place a research is carried out, followed by for what reason or for whom the research will be beneficial.

Unfolding this question would be decision-making; and the decision-maker, a human being appears in several different circumstances as represented in Figure 4.6. Firstly, the actors in TDI; very often TDI studies focuses on tourists alone (Echtner and Ritchie

1993; Tapachai and Waryszak 2000) in determining what the image of a destination is or should be. Although, needs, wants and demands (Kotler 1999) are one of the major marketing criteria, both the push and pull factor of TDI (Stabler1988) has to be addressed. Hence, the other actors involved in TDI, which includes the policy makers, the intermediaries, the promoters, the locals, the environmentalists etc have to be studied along with the tourist. Adding on to the complication are features (scenery, adventure, climate, cost, etc.), sectors (government, NGO, hospitality, transportation) and domains (marketing, sociology, psychology, etc). The externalities mentioned above just forms partially what TDI consists of. Images or imagery (Richardson 1999) is a sum of human sensory (touch, movement, see, hear, taste and smell), in other words the internal system that contributes to TDI.

This discussion of complexity, internal and external attributes of TDI coupled with the multiple layers of interacting fluid network of TDI (Figure 4.6) is highlighted to reflect back on how helpful research philosophy can be for a researcher.



**Figure 4.6 Fluid 3-D Network of TDI**

Reflecting back to Table 4.2, the choice of a paradigm could determine the objective a researcher sets, thus, limiting oneself to a certain procedural constraint of falling into either the inductive or deductive camp.

#### **4.3.2 Deconstruction: The extant TDI research and their matching paradigms**

A snap shot of the existing TDI literature is reviewed and classified into the philosophical stance (inductive or deductive) the researchers have taken. Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 below shows some of the popular TDI researches in the past and the preferred

paradigm of these researchers and it is not meant to exhibit a complete coverage of all TDI articles.

**Table 4.3 Past Research and Preferred Philosophy – Pre 1990's**

Reference	Objective	Methodology	Paradigm
Hunt(1975)	To measure the images of four states;Utah, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming	Structured: - 20 attributes - 7 and 5 point Semi-differential scale	Deductive
Goodrich (1977)	To measure the image of nine destinations: Florida, Hawaii, Mexico, California and five Caribbean Islands	Structured: - 10 attributes - 7 point Likert scale	Deductive
Crompton (1979)	To measure the image of Mexico in different states of the United States	Structured: - 30 attributes - 7 point Semi-differential scale	Deductive
Pearce (1982)	To measure the pre-travel and post travel images of seven countries	Structured - 13 attributes - 6 point Likert scale	Deductive
Hahti & Yavas (1983)	To measure the image of Finland (twelve countries were included in the survey)	Structured - 10 attributes - 9 point Likert scale	Deductive
Kale & Weir (1986)	To measure the image of India	Structured: - 26 attributes - 7 point Likert scale	Deductive
Phelps (1986)	To measure pre-travel and post-travel images of Menorca	Structured: - 32 attributes - Checklist of attributes	Deductive
Gartner & Hunt (1987)	To measure the change in Utah's image over a 12 year period.	Structured: - 11 Attributes - 5 point Semi-differential scale	Deductive
Gartner (1989)	To measure the images of four states : Utah, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming( utilising multi-dimensional scaling technique)	Structured: - 15 Attributes - 5 Point Likert scale	Deductive

**Table 4.4 Past Research and Preferred Philosophy – Post 1990's**

Reference	Objectives/aims/purpose	Approach/ Method	Paradigm
Sirgy & Su (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrative modelling for tourist decision making</li> </ul>	Hypothetical	Deductive
Tapachai (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess beneficial image influencing decision of tourist</li> </ul>	Unstructured, open ended question	Inductive
Coshall (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate the importance of repertory grid approach as a tourists image measurement</li> </ul>	Open-ended grid	Combined
Oppermann (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usage of triangulation in tourism</li> </ul>	Triangulation	Combined
Chen & Hsu (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Image attributes affecting tourist choice behaviour</li> </ul>	Structured, Likert scale	Deductive
Reily (1990)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To measure the image of Montana</li> </ul>	Unstructured - open-ended	Deductive
Echtner, Ritchie (1991, 1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examine the concept of destination image</li> </ul>	Unstructured and structured	Combined
Jenkins (1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess concept of tourist destination image; different academic disciplines</li> </ul>	Unstructured and structured	Combined
Baloglu (1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess affective space structure to large-scale environments (i.e., tourism destination countries)</li> </ul>	Structured	Deductive
Baloglu (1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>compare U.S. international pleasure travelers' current images of four Mediterranean destinations: Turkey, Egypt, Greece, and Italy.</li> </ul>	Structured	Deductive

Past research especially conducted prior to 1990 indicates a strong inclination towards deductive research with the exception of Gunn's work in 1972. A further review of this positivist inclination also reveals that the preferred technique applied is distribution of

questionnaires using either semantic differential or Likert scale. Hence, the chaos theory approach, which believes in dynamism, uncertainty and volatility, is yet to be applied by the positivists in TDI study. A positivist approach is easy to administer but fails to address holistic aspects. Conversely, Jenkins (1999) highlights that an inductive approach enables the researcher to understand the depth of TDI's meaning but lacks rigour in measuring these attributes.

Overcoming this barrier, Echtner and Ritchie (1991,1993) combined both inductive and deductive approaches in their attempt to understand and measure the meaning of TDI. Jenkins (1999) in support of this approach proposed a model for destination image research, which follows a sequence of conducting qualitative (interviews, content analysis, triad and photo elicitation) research initially to develop the relevant construct followed by a quantitative phase to measure the constructs.

Two questions crop out of this combined approach. Firstly, there is a mis-marriage between the research philosophy and the techniques administered. How can one be believed in inductive and deductive at the same time? The second question is, knowing TDI is fluid and dynamic, a mixed method is taken to appreciate TDI more holistically, but why the restriction of a single track from qualitative to quantitative. What if a situation arises that the researcher after administering his quantitative phase, needs evidence of an in-depth interview with the local community to support findings?

### **4.3.3 Reconstruction: Bridging the dualities**

In order to answer the above two questions, firstly it is wise to review the types of study tourism researchers engage in, what would be the most advantageous approach and secondly where the tourism studies came from and its' future research direction. Dann (1988) illustrated a four-quadrant comparison of tourism research of which the horizontal axis represented theoretical awareness whilst the vertical axis represented methodological sophistication. Dann's (1988) analysis revealed that the emphasis on types of tourism research conducted either focused on understanding the in-depth meaning (i.e. anthropology, history) without giving much thought to translate these meanings into measurable apparatus, or in contrast had high level of measurement sophistication (i.e. economy, marketing) without in the first place trying to understand the field of study which was being measured. Dann (1988) further recommended that the optimum approach to conduct tourism research is to have a balance in both understanding the meaning as well as to have sound sophistication to translate the meanings into measurable parameters.

Weaver and Oppermann (2000) in analysing the past, present and future state of tourism research, clearly describes that in the past, tourism was viewed as just a part of an established domain (i.e. economics, sociology), hence heavily borrowing principles from the respective domains to conduct research. The present state of tourism research shows tourism as a field of study but still owes its roots to the multidiscipline stance;

whereby the borrowing of techniques and methods are still inevitable. The authors, anyhow went one step ahead to prescribe what it takes for tourism to be recognised as a discipline of its own right; the challenge lies in looking at tourism as an inter-discipline, thus creating fusion among various disciplines and create a sound theory and apparatus from this fusion. The works of Hollinshead (2002) on transdisciplinary approach and metaphysical realism further strengthens this notion on why a fusion is required to capture reality.

Hence, the mismatch between the philosophy and method clearly creates some form of constraint especially in a fluid and dynamic research area like the TDI. So, as researchers in tourism, are we denied the opportunity and oppressed from addressing the research, as it should be just because there isn't an underlying philosophy to support a fusion in approach. Other limitations to restrict a research process are very much acknowledged but funding, time, and lack of expertise are all parts and parcel of research in any field.

This inspired me to create a fusion at the philosophical level, thus proposing the philosophy of unity instead of duality. The basis of unity is the dynamic and fluid nature of TDI (Figure 4.8) comprising of multi-layered interwoven attributes of actors, domain, sectors, features and senses. And in reality, the world comprises of people (decision-makers) who can be at one extreme merely looking at figures (positivists), in contrast people who just look at words (phenomenology) or people who would want a



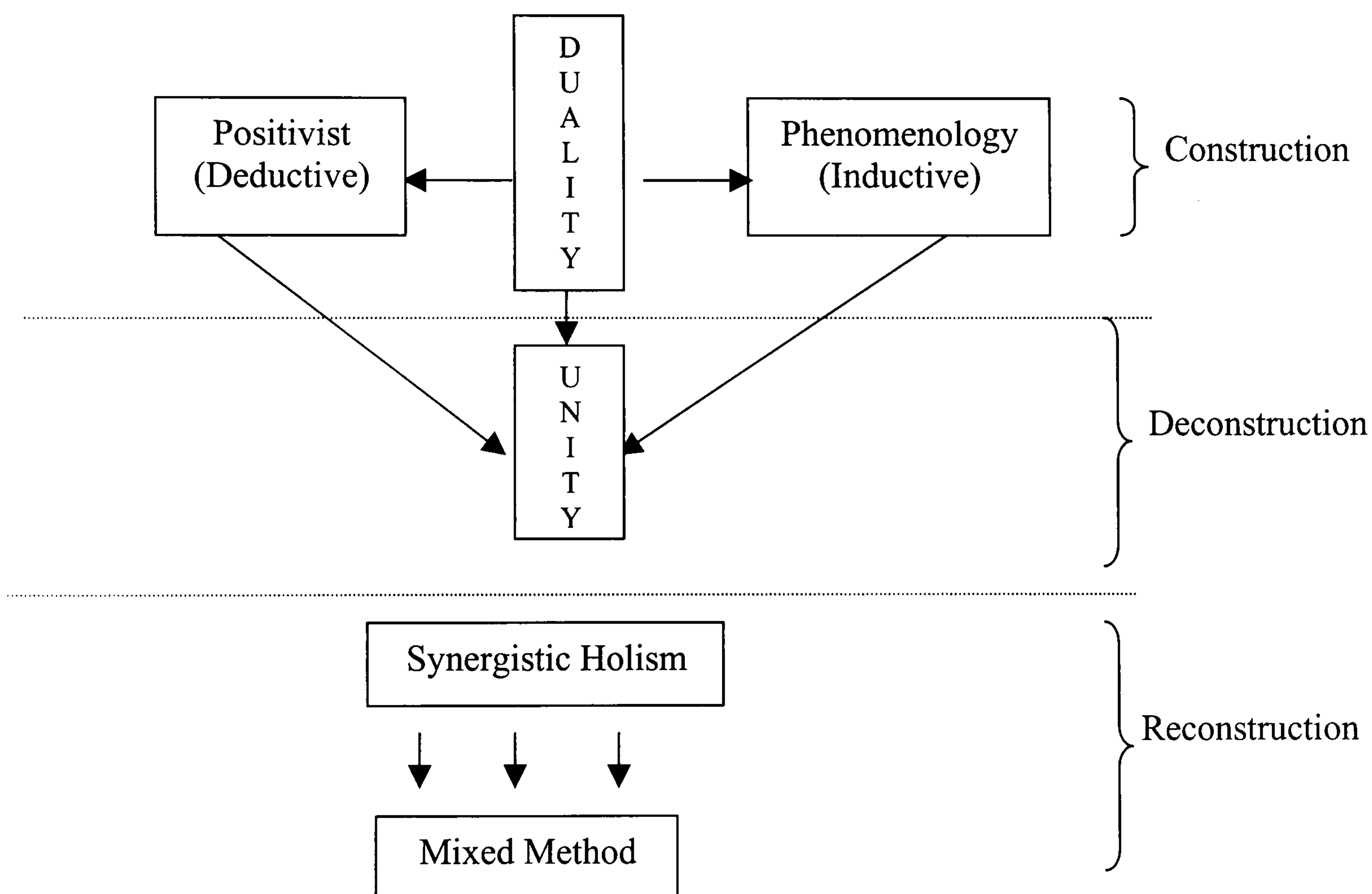
bit of both numbers and words. Thus, to give an entirety by fusing the complexity of TDI, the envisaged conceptualisation I propose is the *Synergistic Holism Paradigm*.

What *Synergistic Holism* is not? Though at the philosophical level it may sound like the critical theory paradigm giving rise to the oppressed groups of researchers who would want a mixed method technique, yet unlike critical theory it does not incline itself towards the inductive approach. *Synergistic Holism* acknowledges the past research approaches, encourages criticism of existing method as the core to it is dynamism and fluidity, hence no one method can be appropriate at all times and all situations. Although, it is not in favour of grand theory, *Synergistic holism* believes in generalisability with adaptation. If this sounds like post-modernism, it is not, simply because again it does not favour one technique (i.e. ethnography or discourse analysis). *Synergistic holism* allows a researcher to answer his or her research question by allowing any techniques (qualitative or quantitative) that best fits. It does not tailor the research question to fit a certain set of belief. *Synergistic holism* does not restrict the sequence of whether qualitative is given superiority to quantitative or vice-versa. *Synergistic holism* does not relate itself to era or time (structuralism, modernism), but what it relates to is the relevance of dynamism of the ever changing environment that we live in. Synergistic holism due to its nature of allowing mix-method automatically paves path to triangulation techniques that adds on to the rigour and validity to research.

#### 4.4 Synergistic Holism in practice

The basic question of why a research is conducted and how the research can be useful not only for academic purpose, but to build the bridge between the dualities of academic versus practitioners, qualitative versus quantitative, inductive versus deductive, theory building versus theory testing was instrumental in writing this chapter. Thus, the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction phases (Figure 4.7) were taken to address the issue.

**Figure 4.7 The Duality to Unity Bridge**



The reviewing process of the paradigms, linking it with the extant TDI literature and understanding the facts causing a less holistic approach in addressing TDI in particular and the tourism research in general, inspired me to envisage the *synergistic holism* paradigm. This paradigm paves path between theory and techniques, giving it a balance of both qualitative and quantitative flavour in addressing a research question. Most importantly, *synergistic holism* gives the freedom to answer a research quest and does not restrict the researcher to tailor make the research question just to fit the philosophy – method relationship a certain paradigm might hold. It is hoped that synergistic holism fusion will act as a foundation in future tourism research to claim its throne as a field of its own.

#### **4.4.1 Philosophical spectrum of Synergistic Holism**

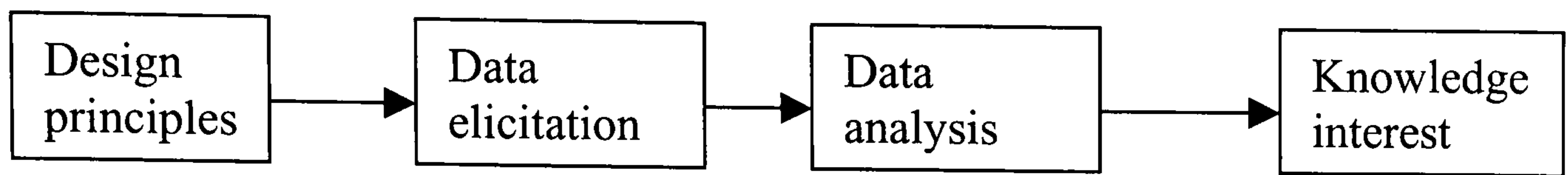
Now, the challenge is to put *Synergistic Holism* in action to achieve the aim and objectives of this thesis. Drawing from the philosophical journey and philosophical investigation, Jennings's (2001) paradigm-method framework (figure 4.4) is adapted to explain the research process of this thesis. To recap, the set of beliefs (paradigm) in carrying out this thesis is Synergistic Holism. The nature of reality (ontology) of Synergistic Holism beliefs that reality is made up of unified wholes. To examine and explain this reality the components within the unified wholes are accepted to coexist, complement each other and work together. Translating this philosophy to the context of this thesis: the dynamism of imagery can't be captured if one school of thought (i.e.

phenomenology) is preferred to the other (i.e. positivist). In the real world, image forms in the mind of people. These people can hold various worldviews and these various worldviews that coexist (synergistic) is what creates the holistic imagery. This very people of the various worldviews are not only tourist, but are also the decisions makers of the tourism industry; are the travel agents and tour operators selling a destination; are researchers examining the imagery concepts. Having reality (imagery) created by various people at various capacity with various worldviews, this thesis beliefs that only a fusion of these various worldviews will be able to address imagery in a holistic manner. This brings forth the next stage in the research process – the epistemology. Epistemology is the relationship between the researcher and subject or object that is being studied. Generally, phenomenologist intervenes with the subject or object of research whereas the positivist tends to distant himself or herself from the subject or object being studied. However, choosing one worldview over the other will bring forth disadvantages. The main disadvantage will be the failure to examine the overall nature of imagery simply because rules are given priority over reality. If a positivist epistemology is adapted, assessment such as structured self-administered surveys where researchers distant themselves from the subjects or objects will be preferred. However, issues that arise includes whether the respondents truly understand the meaning of the enquiry and even worst do the respondents actually answer the survey themselves? This approach is useful when a large response rate is required, for instance assessing the attributes tourists feel are important in creating a strong image. Nevertheless, the study of imagery is not all about tourist as has been discussed in earlier chapters. It is

about the interaction among various actors that form imagery. This requires the researcher to engage in discussion with various tourism industry players as well to assess the communication tool that is utilised in creating destination image. Hence, drawing from Synergistic Holism, a flexible epistemology of the researcher being both distant and close to the subject or object is adapted for this thesis. The strength of this flexible epistemology includes its' ability to capture various worldviews without being restrained by rules. This epistemological stance will be demonstrated in the forthcoming methodological sections and empirical chapters.

#### **4.4.2 Technical spectrum of Synergistic Holism**

So far the research process have spoken of the set of beliefs, the ontology and the epistemology, which are the initial part of the research process. The following sections will discuss the methodology and technique (tools) components of the research process preceding the empirical findings. Research design is required: 1) to systematically carry out the research and 2) as a guideline to facilitate the research process for both the researcher and the third person who is experiencing (reading and understanding) the particular research piece. Hence, the four dimensions (Figure 4.8) in social research drawn from the work of Bauer (2000) is utilised in this thesis. Discussions in this section includes the design principle that refers to the methodological set of guidelines in conducting research and the data elicitation that explains of the tools and techniques utilised in collecting data. Data analysis, finding and knowledge interest will be discussed in the following empirical chapters.



**Figure 4.8 Four dimensions in social research**

The design principles and data elicitation of this thesis are decided based upon assessing destination imagery in a holistic manner. This includes assessing the meaning and measurement of imagery from the perspective of various actors, various domains, various sectors and various features (psychological and functional) as per table 4.5 below.

**Table 4.5. Philosophical and technical fusion of empirical study**

Empirical Study	Actors/ Subject	Domains	Sectors	Features	Principle	Tools
Chapter 5	Tourists, travel advisers	Marketing, Psychology, Statistics	Aviation, Tourism-Tour operators, travel agents	Attractions, Facilities, Services etc.	Positivism, Case study, Structured, Unstructured, Descriptive, Deductive	Questionnaire, SPSS
Chapter 6	Representatives of MTPB, Higher education institutions, Airport management, tour operator	Philosophy, Linguistic	Tourism, Aviation, Academic, Consultancy	Facilities, Services, Attractions, Education, Training, Standards, etc.	Interpretive, Descriptive, Case study, Thematic, Non-reductionism and deductive	Discourse analysis
Chapter 7	Textual and visual content of dossiers, Researcher	Linguistic, Philosophy, Basic statistics, Marketing	Tourism-outbound tour operators and Travel agents	Facilities, Services, Psychological myths, Attractions, etc.	Structuralism, Descriptive, Case study Deductive and inductive	Semiotic analysis, Content analysis

In a nutshell, the above table shows how Synergistic Holism is put into action for this thesis. The infusion of the various components namely actors, domains and features are self-explanatory at this point and will be elaborated further in the following sections of design principle and data elicitation. The flexible epistemology adapted becomes important at this juncture, as this approach had made it possible to assess these various components. Chapter 5, although largely is assessed from a positivist outlook, the description of findings required a more inductive approach. Chapter 6 on the other hand largely adapted the interpretive and non-reductionism approach for the initial stages and adapted a thematic/deductive approach towards the later part of this chapter to explain the findings. Finally, chapter 7 incorporates both inductive and deductive styles. Deductive mainly at the initial stage whereby large amount of information were clustered into themes. And, deductive at the later stages where these themes were assessed to understand the deeper structure of meaning. The above-discussed methodological route is not a rigid path that has to be taken in order to capture imagery in a holistic manner. This route is taken based upon the availability of resources both in terms of finance and time within a PhD framework. The next section will discuss on the methodological route taken by each empirical study. And the discussion will be presented both from the design principle and data elicitation angle.

#### **4.5 Design principles of empirical study on tourists and travel advisers (Chapter 5)**

The design principles are based upon a combination of case study and sample survey. Case study because the focus is in addressing a specific country (Malaysia as a destination image) and specific respondents (British perspectives of the tourists and the travel advisers). Whilst the survey approach suited best as the number of variables as well as the target respondents to be studied are large. Hence, this study that is rather structured and numerical in nature draws its philosophical rooting from a positivist paradigm. The ontological (Jennings, 2001) basis of this study perceives social science (tourism) as being organised by universal laws and truths. This is evident by the causal relationship route taken in this study: for instance it is believed that the overall destination image of Malaysia (dependent variable) is the sum of a set of independent variables (i.e. pricing, promotion, attractions) as perceived by the tourists and the travel advisers. Once this causal relationship is in place, from a positivist philosophical stance, it is believed that the tourist and travel advisers' behaviours can be shaped and controlled. This consequently will provide the route to generalise the outcome of the study if carried out systematically. And this outcome governed by the above mentioned laws of causal relationship would be the 'truth' from a positivist angle.

In order to make generalisations, one should be able to repeat the same formula to obtain similar results. To attain such formula, the epistemology of this study emphasises on objectivity; that means strict rules and procedures to be followed. And



the most obvious epistemological trait is the relationship between the researcher and the subject (tourist and tour advisers for the purpose of this study). Hence, the '*etic*' (Fetterman, 1989) perspective giving prominence to conduct the study from an outsiders view is adapted; simply for the reason that the researcher's influence on the subjects are kept minimum.

On a different note of the philosophical underpinnings on positivism, the aim is not to achieve the understanding of the holistic social system of destination image, but to break the system down into smaller units. The statistics and findings will assist some element of image, for instance from a marketing perspective but may not address the other social systems contributing to image. Thus, these gaps of addressing other social setting: the other social actors of tourism and understanding the deeper structure of the meaning image are addressed in chapters 6 & 7 in a holistic-inductive fashion.

#### **4.6 Data elicitation of empirical study on tourists and travel advisers (Chapter 5)**

The most challenging and tedious part in adapting the positivists' worldview is the planning phase of data elicitation. Prior to embark on the field work, a design of the components involved and how these components interact amongst one and the other has to be carefully structured. Drawing attention back to the purpose of the study assists in deriving these components. Therefore, to understand the causal relationship of the overall destination image of Malaysia from the British tourist and travel adviser

perspectives of independent variables, the components as detailed below are taken into consideration:

- What is measured?
- Survey design – self administered questionnaire
- Sampling design – probability versus non-probability sampling

#### **4.6.1 What is measured?**

Drawing from literature [Ecthner and Ritchie (1991, 1993), Gallarza (2000) and Jenkins (1999)] and complementing the existing components of study from the exploratory research (Ramachandran 2003), the variables and themes to be understood and measured with regards to the research aim were derived. The variables and themes derived for both the tourist and travel advisers are as per table 4.6. The variables and themes, though similar, is not the exact replica for both the tourist and travel advisers as careful construction and expert opinion were considered to determine these components that will suit the respondents best. These consideration are based mainly from two angles; firstly the travel experience and secondly the difference between a seller and buyer. For instance, the survey is aimed at British tourists who have landed and are experiencing Malaysia. But as for the travel advisers, since the survey is sent to their respective offices in the UK, there is a possibility that the respondent answering the survey may not have hands on experience of Malaysia. Hence, the variable and themes for the travel advisers will appear as not as extensive as the ones for the tourists. On the

other hand, from a business angle, certain sections (i.e. business-to-business relationship) have been added to understand the extent of partnership, collaboration and to some extent market share from a seller's view of Malaysia as a destination. Hence, taking into account the experience and buyer/seller components, the themes and variables derived are as in table 4.6 below:

**Table 4.6 Variables and themes derived**

<b>TOURISTS</b>		<b>TRAVEL ADVISERS</b>	
For the <i>Theme</i> <b>ATTRACTIONS</b> , the variables (37 in total) are as follows:		For the <i>Theme</i> <b>ATTRACTIONS</b> , the variables (16 in total) are as follows:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Climate,</li> <li>2- Natural features/scenery,</li> <li>3- Flora and fauna,</li> <li>4- Historic/heritage,</li> <li>5- Artistic and architectural</li> <li>6- Traditional arts</li> <li>7- Cuisine</li> <li>8- Unspoiled Nature</li> <li>9- Special events</li> <li>10- Amusement park</li> <li>11- Water activity</li> <li>12- Entertainment</li> <li>13- Nature activity</li> <li>14- Adventure activity</li> <li>15- National parks</li> <li>16- Night life</li> <li>17- Exotic atmosphere</li> <li>18- Adult entertainment</li> <li>19- Alcohol availability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20- Filming</li> <li>21- Sandy beach</li> <li>22- Crowdedness</li> <li>23- Liveliness</li> <li>24- Technology</li> <li>25- Fake products</li> <li>26- Restful/relaxing</li> <li>27- Attractiveness of Cities</li> <li>28- Commercial</li> <li>29- Urbanisation</li> <li>30- Small towns</li> <li>31- Authenticity of tourism experience</li> <li>32- Open space</li> <li>33- Merchandise quality</li> <li>34- Family holiday</li> <li>35- Children friendly</li> <li>36- Product originality</li> <li>37- Cultural precinct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Climate,</li> <li>2- Natural features/scenery,</li> <li>3- Flora and fauna,</li> <li>4- Historic/heritage,</li> <li>5- Artistic and architectural</li> <li>6- Cuisine</li> <li>7- Entertainment</li> <li>8- Exotic atmosphere</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9- Sandy beach</li> <li>10- Crowdedness</li> <li>11- Liveliness</li> <li>12- Restful/relaxing</li> <li>13- Attractiveness of Cities</li> <li>14- Authenticity of tourism experience</li> <li>15- Family holiday</li> <li>16- Product originality</li> </ul>
For the <i>Theme</i> <b>HEALTH/SAFETY</b> , the variables (8 in total) are as follows:		For the <i>Theme</i> <b>HEALTH/SAFETY</b> , the variables (5 in total) are as follows:	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Clean destination</li> <li>2- Sanitation practice</li> <li>3- Food and beverage and hygiene</li> <li>4- Political stability</li> <li>5- Racial prejudice (tourist and local)</li> <li>6- Racial prejudice (local ethnic group)</li> <li>7- Terrorism</li> <li>8- Overall safety</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Clean destination</li> <li>2- Food and beverage and hygiene</li> <li>3- Political stability</li> <li>4- Terrorism</li> <li>5- Overall safety</li> </ol>
<p>For the <i>Theme</i> <b>FACILITIES</b>, the variables (13 in total) are as follows:</p>	<p>For the <i>Theme</i> <b>FACILITIES</b>, the variables (13 in total) are as follows:</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Accommodation variety</li> <li>2- Accommodation quality</li> <li>3- Airport quality</li> <li>4- Tourist information</li> <li>5- Shopping</li> <li>6- Food services</li> <li>7- Accessibility to natural area</li> <li>8- Convention</li> <li>9- Recreation</li> <li>10- Sports</li> <li>11- Health/Medical</li> <li>12- Banks/currency exchange</li> <li>13- Children/baby</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Accommodation variety</li> <li>2- Accommodation quality</li> <li>3- Airport quality</li> <li>4- Tourist information</li> <li>5- Shopping</li> <li>6- Food services</li> <li>7- Accessibility to natural area</li> <li>8- Convention</li> <li>9- Recreation</li> <li>10- Sports</li> <li>11- Health/Medical</li> <li>12- Banks/currency exchange</li> <li>13- Children/baby</li> </ol>
<p>For the <i>Theme</i> <b>COMMUNICATION / TRANSPORTATION</b>, the variables (15 in total) are as follows:</p>	<p>For the <i>Theme</i> <b>COMMUNICATION / TRANSPORTATION</b>, the variables (15 in total) are as follows:</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Telecommunications</li> <li>2- Flight availability</li> <li>3- Flying time</li> <li>4- Flight routes</li> <li>5- Use of e-commerce</li> <li>6- Use of information technology</li> <li>7- Communication between tourists and locals</li> <li>8- Local transportation</li> <li>9- Immigration/Customs</li> <li>10- Hospitality/friendliness/receptiveness</li> <li>11- Promotion as a destination</li> <li>12- Specific tourism activities</li> <li>13- Community involvement</li> <li>14- Socio-economic link with the UK</li> <li>15- Industry partnership/networking</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Telecommunications</li> <li>2- Flight availability</li> <li>3- Flying time</li> <li>4- Flight routes</li> <li>5- Use of e-commerce</li> <li>6- Use of information technology</li> <li>7- Communication between tourists and locals</li> <li>8- Local transportation</li> <li>9- Immigration/Customs</li> <li>10- Hospitality/friendliness/receptiveness</li> <li>11- Promotion as a destination</li> <li>12- Specific tourism activities</li> <li>13- Community involvement</li> <li>14- Socio-economic link with the UK</li> <li>15- Industry partnership/networking</li> </ol>
<p>For the <i>Theme SERVICES</i>, the variables (11 in total) are as follows:</p>	<p>For the <i>Theme SERVICES</i>, the variables (9 in total) are as follows:</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Feedback effort by tourism firms</li> <li>2- Front line staff</li> <li>3- Custom/immigrations</li> <li>4- Managers' capability</li> <li>5- Performance standards</li> <li>6- Service quality</li> <li>7- First instance assistance</li> <li>8- Development in response to demand</li> <li>9- Destination packaging</li> <li>10- Portrayed image versus actual image</li> <li>11- Overall quality</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Front line staff</li> <li>2- Custom/immigrations</li> <li>3- Managers' capability</li> <li>4- Performance standards</li> <li>5- Service quality</li> <li>6- First instance assistance</li> <li>7- Destination packaging</li> <li>8- Portrayed image versus actual image</li> <li>9- Overall quality</li> </ol>
<p>For the <i>Theme VALUE FOR MONEY</i>, the variables (8 in total) are as follows:</p>	<p>For the <i>Theme VALUE FOR MONEY</i>, the variables (8 in total) are as follows:</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Domestic tourism package</li> <li>2- Shopping</li> <li>3- International flights</li> <li>4- Accommodation</li> <li>5- Domestic travel</li> <li>6- Alcohol purchase</li> <li>7- Food and beverage (meals)</li> <li>8- Overall pricing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Domestic tourism package</li> <li>2- Shopping</li> <li>3- International flights</li> <li>4- Accommodation</li> <li>5- Domestic travel</li> <li>6- Alcohol purchase</li> <li>7- Food and beverage (meals)</li> <li>8- Overall pricing</li> </ol>
<p>For the <i>Theme</i> <b>MANAGEMENT POLICIES</b>, the variables (5 in total) are as follows:</p>	<p>After careful consideration, the <i>Management policies theme</i> in the travel adviser survey was removed, because at that point it was felt that it would be appropriate to give their views only if the respondents have visited the destination.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- To obtain visa</li> <li>2- Government commitment</li> <li>3- Public sectors recognition on sustainable tourism development</li> <li>4- Private sectors recognition on sustainable tourism development</li> <li>5- Malaysia's NTO's reputation</li> </ol>	
<p>The <i>theme Business-to-business relationship</i> is neither relevant nor applicable to the tourist.</p>	<p>For the <i>Theme</i> <b>BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP</b>, the variables (11 in total) are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Support from Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB)</li> <li>2- Commitment towards Malaysia</li> <li>3- Malaysian inbound tour operators</li> <li>4- Malaysia Airlines (MAS)</li> <li>5- Use of information technology and e-commerce</li> <li>6- Accommodation sector in Malaysia</li> <li>7- Food and Beverage in Malaysia</li> <li>8- Malaysian transportation</li> <li>9- Selling advantage of attractions</li> <li>10- Rewards from selling Malaysia</li> <li>11- Overall business-to-business relationship</li> </ol>

Besides the above, another dimension of response: the '*OVERALL DESTINATION IMAGE*' of Malaysia for both the surveys (tourists and travel advisers) was considered useful as the above independent variables can be tested against this (*OVERALL DESTINATION IMAGE*) dependent variable. In example a hypothetical equation of:

$$\text{TDI} = f(\text{A} + \text{H} + \text{F} + \text{C} + \text{S} + \text{V} + \text{M}) \text{ for tourist}$$

$$\text{TDI} = f(\text{A} + \text{H} + \text{F} + \text{C} + \text{S} + \text{V} + \text{B}) \text{ for travel advisers}$$

Where in the causal relationship equation, TDI (dependent variable) represents the overall destination image of Malaysia and the independent variables are represented as clusters of themes (A = attractions, H = health and safety, F = facilities, S = services, V = value for money and M = management policies, B = business-to-business relationship).

On the question of what else to be measured, three more sections were considered. It was felt that besides forcing the respondents to answer the question within a certain context, it was also essential to allow them to express their views freely. Therefore, these three sections will have a subjective element that allows the respondents to express their views freely in their own words. Two of the sections namely experience/perception and demographic profile are considered for both the tourists and travel advisers and the third section, which is the description of the area of business, only suits the travel advisers. The questions and questionnaire construction will be discussed in detail in the following section.



#### **4.6.2 Survey design – self administered questionnaire**

Adapting an 'etic' (distant researcher-respondent relationship) approach, self-administered questionnaire was found most suitable for this study, where the researcher's influence on respondents is minimum. Furthermore, the self-administered questionnaire saves the researcher from travelling to the respondents if the respondents are geographically apart. For instance, the UK based travel advisers can be in any corner of Britain (i.e. England, Wales, Scotland or N. Ireland) and to travel to each and every respondent may not be feasible. As for the tourist respondents, if situation arise that the researcher has to return from his/her field trip to the respective research institution, then the self-administered questionnaire permits an ongoing data collection process without requiring the researcher's intervention. Hence, this approach is both economical and less time consuming especially in a PhD environment where both financial resources and time constraint is an issue.

However, prior to moving into constructing the questionnaire itself, the scaling design that suits the questions to be asked should be determined first. What is scaling design? The concept of scaling refers to assigning numbers (Cooper, 1998) to objects/subjects that is being studied, mainly for the purpose of standardization; ease of calculation; and to reflect confidence in measurement and results. However, the first task is to understand what type of data is to be measured. For the purpose of this study, three data types are considered namely interval, ordinal and nominal. The interval scale in the

form of *Likert* scale is used for the independent and dependent variables that have been listed in the previous section. This five-point Likert scale [least favourable (1) to most favourable (5)] with an additional option of don't know/not sure is constructed to express the respondents attitude towards each variable. The option of don't know /not sure is included mainly due to the reason that a respondent have the tendency of choosing the middle point of undecided if the option don't know is unavailable. In the actual questionnaire construction, the terms strongly disagree to strongly agree, terrible to excellent and least attractive to most attractive is used to describe the least favourable to most favourable attitudinal options based upon the suitability of reasoning for each variable. The *Likert scale* option has also been used in some parts of the experience/perception section to measure the attitude of respondents.

On the other hand, the ordinal and nominal data are used mostly for the later sections of the questionnaire; the experience/perception; the demographic; and the area of business sections. Unlike the interval scale where the numerical scores reflect the degree of attitude favourableness, the ordinal and nominal data do not have the ability to measure the distance between the numerical scores. What this means is that in an interval scale if the scale is 1 to 5, any figure from the computation that results between 1 and 5 (i.e. 1.3, 2.6, 4.3) has a meaning. For instance the average result of a variable, say the sports facilities is 3.5 indicates that the overall response falls between satisfactory and good. It is neither satisfactory nor good, but it is in-between and it has a meaning. The nominal scale on the other hand will not produce any meaning if the computational score is

between two numerical codes. For instance if 1 represents male and 2 female, a computation that results in 1.5 does not have a meaning to it. Therefore, demographic data like the gender, occupation and ethnic origin falls under the nominal category where the purpose of these data is not to secure precise measurements but to uncover relationships. The other type of data used in the construction of this questionnaire is the ordinal data. The ordinal data has more computational use than the nominal data but does not have the strength of the interval data. The ordinal data is superior to the nominal data because it has an indicator of order that nominal data does not have. An indicator of order means, if a question consists of numbers between 1 to 3, and if 2 is greater than 1, and 3 is greater than 2, therefore 3 must be greater than 1. The examples of the ordinal data in the questionnaires, from the demographic section are the categories of income and age group. For instance, 1 representing age group between 16-24, 2 representing 25-44, 3 representing 45-54, 4 representing 55-65 and 5 representing 66 and over, are examples of 1 is greater than 2 and so on and so forth. But this situation does not occur in the nominal data, say if 1 is male and 2 is female, one can't conclude that 1 is greater than 2 or vice versa. The data of ordinal scale hence paves way for a ranked meaning rather than a rated meaning that can be derived from the interval scale. These constructs of questions based upon the data type and scales as discussed above can be seen in detail in the appendices 1 (tourist questionnaire) and 2 (travel advisers questionnaire) of this thesis. Emphasis on scaling is given at this stage so that the coding and computational process after data collection becomes more systematic and convenient.

Nevertheless, the questionnaires as seen in appendices 1 and 2 are not the initial appearance but the final version. The questionnaire construction began with the design for the tourists. Only after refining the tourist questionnaire, the travel advisers' questionnaire was constructed. Therefore, the construction of the travel advisers' questionnaire became easy due to the learning experience in crystallising the questionnaire for tourists. The initial appearance of the tourist questionnaire consisted of only three parts; the independent and dependent variables clustered in one part, the experience/perception on the other and the demographic as the third part. The initial questionnaire, which was presented in a non-thematic fashion, was put through a pilot study namely to identify and rectify the following issues:

- The terms used are understandable
- Variables provided are relevant and acceptable for measurement purpose
- Time taken to complete

The 'dress rehearsal' role of pilot study on this questionnaire revealed the following shortcomings, which were then rectified prior to administering the actual survey in the field:

- Some of the terms used had to be simplified and the language used appropriate to the British respondents' context. For instance, the word bush which means forest /jungle to an Australian may not mean the same to a British tourist.
- Categories describing the demographic profile of the respondent had to be made relevant to the British tourists. For instance, the question on income should

provide response categories in pounds sterling and not Ringgit Malaysia or US dollars.

- Reduce the number of variable especially the one which appears to be repetitive.
- Each question should focus on one matter rather than combining two or three issue in one question.
- Definition/meaning provided by the question when necessary.
- Categories use to diminish detailed responses.

Drawing from the above and testing the amended version to get a crystallised outcome; the final version of the questionnaire for the tourist (Appendix 1) consisted of 7 themes, in which each themes comprised of a number of independent variables. And at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> theme the dependent variable question was presented. The more subjective nature of questioning that includes the experience/perception and demographic was presented as part 8 and 9 of the questionnaire. As for the travel advisers' questionnaire (appendix 2), amendments and changes were made based on experts' opinion. And the final version of the questionnaire had the management polices part omitted, but the business-to-business relationship and area of business included. The details of the variables, and the questions will be discussed later in the data analysis chapter. But before moving on to the analysis, how we select our respondents, how many respondents are required and where to find the respondents need to be clarified first and for that a sampling design is required.

### **4.6.3 Sampling design – probability versus non-probability sampling**

A sample means an element from the population that would be studied and for this chapter are the British tourists in Malaysia and the travel advisers in the UK. The selection of respondents or sampling for the tourists and travel advisers varies. Here I shall discuss on the sampling process of the tourist first before continuing to the travel advisers. A sample is normally taken because the population is too large and may not be economically and financially feasible to study the whole population. Nevertheless, a good sample is required if it were to represent the whole population. A good sample means an accurate assessment of the population, an unbiased representation that minimises error and avoids misrepresentation. A good sample if achieves the above, then the method used will be reliable, valid, replicable and can be generalised. And there are two types of sampling designs, which can be adapted in achieving a representation of the population. Of the two types, the probabilistic sampling design is superior as compared to the non-probabilistic sampling design as the former follows a random systematic procedure that provides equal chance for every character in a population to be represented in the sample. On the other hand the non-probabilistic sample is more subjective in nature and may not represent the true population. Hence, if the non-probabilistic route is taken, then the study's focus will shift to theory building rather than theory testing. Therefore test of significance and use of sophisticated statistical procedures will not apply to the non-probabilistic route.

Realising the strength of the probabilistic route, the procedures (Cooper, 1998) outlined by probabilistic sampling below is followed for this study:

- Relevant population of the study
- The sampling frame
- The required sample size

The relevant population considered for this study are British tourist who are already in and experiencing Malaysia. The population size was determined from Tourism Malaysia's (2001) tourist arrival statistics. Since the study was carried out in the year 2002, the average from the total of British tourist arrival to Malaysia for the year 2000(237,757) and 2001(262,423) was taken into account. The weighted average of the two figures was taken as an estimated population size: 250,090. A sampling frame was not feasible due to the nature of the tourism industry. There will not be a list of tourist who has entered Malaysia that is readily available. Even if there is, it will be a matter of confidentiality, which will be retained by the immigration office and not for public access. Without the population list, simple random, systematic and stratified sampling techniques were not possible within the probabilistic framework. The next available option was the multiphase sampling. The multiphase sampling design for this study is as follows:

- Firstly, to identify the direct flights and its frequency in a week to the United Kingdom (UK). The direct flights to the UK were operated by the Malaysian

Airlines (MAS) which operates two flights to London on a daily basis and three flights to Manchester in a week. Therefore, at the time of the research was carried out (October 2002 – December 2002) MAS operated 17 flights in total in a week to the UK.

- Therefore a random number (4) was assigned for the first sampling phase, which is the selection of the aircraft. Therefore, from the departure schedule, every 4<sup>th</sup> aircraft that leaves to the UK will be selected. The departure flight was preferred to the arrival flights simply because the tourists would not have experienced Malaysia and would not be able to give an extensive view.
- The second phase of sampling also through assignment of a random number (7) was decided. This time it will be the 7<sup>th</sup> British passenger (to be identified through their passport while checking into the departure hall) who passes through the entrance of the departure hall.

Having the sampling technique sorted out, the next in sequence is to determine the sample size. That is the number of respondents (tourists) required to answer the questionnaire to get a fair representation of the population. The population size calculated earlier was a representation of a year. Therefore it will be too ambitious to reach a representative sample based upon a whole years population just within three months of study (October 2002-December 2002). Therefore a realistic population size for a three month period was determined by dividing 250,090 by twelve, and the results multiplied by three: hence the revised population size is 62,523. The population size is required to determine the sample size. Based on



Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) tabulation, a population of 50,000 requires a sample size of 381 respondents and a population of 75,000 requires a sample size of 382 respondents. Hence for the purpose of this study, the sample size required was set as 382 respondents.

The relevant population for the other part of this study are the travel advisers (in the UK) consisting of both travel agent and tour operators who actively promote Malaysia as a holiday destination. The list (sampling frame) that was obtained from the Malaysian Promotion Tourism Board in London consisted of 45 representatives. Since the population size was fairly small, the questionnaires were sent out via mail with a self-addressed, stamped return envelope to all the 45 travel advisers. Nevertheless, according to Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) tabulation, a sample size of 40 was required for a population size of 45 to provide good representation. All these while it have been solely a planning phase; the next challenge is to stage this plan as a reality.

#### **4.6.4 The reality, the challenge and pragmatic decisions.**

The execution phase did not flow as expected. Many reasons, especially the external uncontrollable issues were the cause. The study (on tourists) that was to take place between October and December 2002 did not actually start till middle of December 2002 mainly due to airport security reasons. Below is the chronology of events that initially delayed and later changed the course of action of this study:

- End of September 2002: Await approval from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport Security to carry out research.
- Middle of October 2002: Approval given but along with conditions. The aftermath of 9/11 being the reason why security has been stepped up. The conditions are as follows; 1) Only 2 weeks access given to be in the airport vicinity. 2) I am allowed to administer the survey on a personal basis but not with a group of people (i.e. research assistant). 3) I was allowed to be at the check-in counter and out side the gates of departure hall but was not granted permission to be in the departure holding lounge. The challenge then was on getting 382 respondents within a two-week time frame, all alone (without assistance). On top of that, because permission was not granted at the holding lounge, new challenges cropped up. Identifying the British tourist became more difficult – although a British tourist can be identified at the check-in counter through their passports, the situation to distribute the questionnaire may not be suitable, for a simple reason they would be busy with their luggage and probably some last minute shopping from the duty free outlets. Holding lounge would have been ideal simply because the British tourist can be easily identified when they present their boarding pass along with their passport and secondly, once in the holding lounge the passenger will easily have between ½ an hour to an hour to spare to answer the questionnaires. Another issue is that because of the time restriction without assistance, whether it was feasible to achieve the probabilistic sampling as outlined earlier. Nevertheless, with all these

challenges ahead, I embarked on the mission to conduct my survey. To my surprise, not only the challenges anticipated above became a reality but to add on to the existing challenges, most of the British tourists who used the airport were transit passengers mainly from Australia and New Zealand. Therefore, had no knowledge or experience of the Malaysian tourism environment.

- End October 2002: Alternative action plans were considered. Firstly, how is it to make possible in carrying out probabilistic sampling. The Malaysian Airlines (MAS) was approached to provide assistance on their direct flights to the UK. A discussion with the human resources and training director of MAS seemed promising but an approval from the operational side was required. The assistance sought after from MAS was for both at the entrance to the departure holding lounge and in-flight cabin crew. MAS staffs at the entrance of the holding lounge were to identify (from passport presented) the British tourist and distribute the questionnaires systematically (every 7<sup>th</sup> British passport holder). Then the cabin crew were to collect the questionnaires in-flight. Hence, the tourist would have the option of completing the questionnaire while in the holding lounge or during their 13 hours flight journey.
- First week November 2002: MAS operations team was unable to assist. Reason being approval from the Ministry had to be obtained if such activity were to be carried out. At this point, I've spent half the time allocated for my field trip without much success. These situations made me decide to drop the route of probabilistic sampling and adapt a non-probabilistic sampling path, which,

means the finding of the study can't be generalised but has to be viewed as a theory building process. Once the issue of sampling was decided, then other tourism attractions, facilities and amenities that the British tourists use were identified. The places that were certain of receiving British tourists were the resort based accommodation namely in Penang, Langkawi and Pangkor.

- End of November 2002: Approaching these resorts was not very successful because the policies of these resorts are to give privacy and satisfaction to their clients. Hence, these resorts were not keen on taking part in such survey exercise.
- First week December 2002: After figuring out the mode of transportation the British tourists would take to reach their destinations (i.e. Pangkor Laut, Tioman, etc.), an in-bound tour operator who operates flights to these destinations was approached. Like a shed of light at the end of the tunnel, the tour operator agreed to assist in carrying out the survey. Nevertheless, the person in-charge did advise me that the tourist flow is low and would require longer period of time to get good response.
- Middle December 2002. Considering the advice given, I made 1,000 copies of the questionnaires and handed over to the tour operator to distribute. At this point, the sampling design adapted from a non-probabilistic angle was purposive sampling where the purpose was solely to get a response as long as the respondent met the criteria of a British tourist. Meanwhile, I got a friend of mine to assist me in collecting the questionnaires once I've departed to the UK.

- End of December 2002. Response rate was not very good, but considering the issues like 9/11 and the decrease of overall tourists' arrival to Malaysia this was not of a surprise. Therefore, I had asked the tour operator to continue the survey until end of December 2003. I had also introduced my friend to the operator for any assistance while I was away in the UK.

While the challenge of questionnaire administration had been taken care of as above, the next set of issues is related to the response rate at the end of the survey. Although 1000 questionnaires were provided for distribution, only 53 (14 % response rate) were returned of which only 41(11% response rate) were usable. The omitted questionnaires were either partially completed or returned without completion. An 11% response rate of the sample size (382) required is far too low in conducting computation for the purpose of generalisation. Furthermore, the non-probabilistic route would not reflect the true population even if the numbers were larger. Anyway, a larger number would definitely provide a better representation. Some of the reasons that caused low response rate are listed below:

- Low tourist arrival namely due to 9/11, Bali bombing and later on the effects of SARS. These are unavoidable, external happening beyond ones control but had an adverse effect on my research.
- Although self-administered and an option of don't' know/not sure were given, the British tourist still wanted to know more about some questions where the cabin crew were unable to assist them.

- Due to the down turn of the tourism economy in Malaysia, two of the staffs that handled my questionnaire distribution left the organisation, leaving it to the existing staffs to carry out. At this point, I feel that my personal presence could have improved the situation better.
- Many tourists never returned the questionnaires distributed. This could be a training issue on how the questionnaires were to be distributed and collected. Again, the instructions given had to go pass few channels (layers) before it actually reached the person who is in the field administering. This situation was unavoidable firstly because it was towards the end of my field visit (time constraint). Secondly, it is not the policy of the organisation to allow a stranger to step in to train their staffs for my own benefit. And thirdly, I did not have the funds to provide any incentives to these staffs that were actually assisting outside their job description.
- Although during the pilot testing, the time taken to answer the questionnaire was not a major issue, the length of the questionnaire could have been a factor why some tourists would have chosen not to complete.

As for the travel adviser's self-administered mail survey, which was conducted after (March – June 2003) gaining some experience with the tourist's survey, some amendments were made to the questionnaire. Amendments involved reducing some variables/themes and adding on some of the new variables/themes to suit the respondents better. Again the challenge was on chasing the respondents to reply. With follow on efforts made after mailing, in the likes of telephone calls and e-mails, the

final number of questionnaires received were 15(33% response rate of the population) of which only 11 (24%)were usable. Again the omitted ones were due to partial or non-completion. Mail surveys are known to have low response rate and this came as no surprise considering the small population size. Due to the small population size, the sample size of 40 as explained earlier would have been appropriate to make generalisation. But the outcome of small response rate for both the travel adviser and tourist only leaves with two options: 1) totally omit this part of the study from this PhD dissertation, or 2) use it in a descriptive fashion.

Giving weight to being pragmatic, it will be a total waste of the learning process gained if this piece is brushed a side. As PhD is a process of learning, discovering and overcoming the challenges in research, coupled with the breadth and depth of the information from the questionnaire, my decision is to use this data as for the purpose of descriptive statistic as opposed to the initial plan of using it for the purpose of inferential statistic.

#### **4.7 Design Principle of empirical study on industry players (Chapter 6)**

This study is to understand people. What people feel and think about a given situation; and for this study purpose, the destination image phenomena is probed. People in this context of study mean the actors or the industry players in tourism. In line with the main aim of this thesis and drawing from the initial phases of literature review, theoretical and operational framework, the need to understand the governance of the

tourism destination image arose. Governance here means the way of life of the actors involved and their decision-making patterns that contribute to the formation of destination image. To understand the governing pattern of these various industry players, to probe into the depth of their thoughts, and to churn the data that is grounded in the field, the design principle of this study is drawn from the ontology and epistemology of the interpretivist phenomenology. Hence, the design principle believes that the data is grounded. I will like to make it clear at this stage that this study is not based on Grounded Theory as suggested by Glasser and Strauss (1967); but the word grounded here means that the data in search is out there in the field but references has been made to arrive at this juncture. Grounded Theory doesn't acknowledge the practice of referring to other materials before completing a field study. An inductive approach in search of knowledge is adapted simply because the aim is to probe the depth of the meaning as opposed to the deductive approach which focuses on the breadth of the knowledge. Hence this piece of research has to be treated as a theory building exercise as compared to the theory testing exercise preferred by the positivist.

#### **4.8 Data Elicitation of empirical study on industry players (Chapter 6)**

Having adapted the above design principle, I will explain why individual depth interview technique has been the preferred choice for data elicitation. Data elicitation means drawing out data from the field. Firstly, it is the ontological and epistemological stance that I take to address the issue in hand for this chapter. Just to recap, my philosophical stance for the whole thesis is Synergistic holism as explained in the



research process section. Synergistic Holism allows mix method, paradigm and philosophical approach as the fundamentals of Synergistic Holism is flexibility and to address the research issue in hand with the most appropriate technique.. The philosophical position held for this study is as mentioned by Gaskell (2000):

“.....the assumption that the social world is not an unproblematic given: it is actively constructed by people in their everyday life, but not under conditions of their own making..... Hence the qualitative interview provides the basic data for the development of an understanding of the relations between social actors and their situations.”

I hold another crucial point that directed me to in-depth interview as my data elicitation technique that is due to its appropriateness in my given situation of research. Basically, a PhD research is constrained by time and funding elements, and my study required understanding a different range of people in a short time. Last but not least, I wanted to have a face-to face encounter with these decision makers to understand their perspectives on destination image in their own words. Having decided on the technique, the next challenge was on planning and executing it. Here, I will elaborate on the preparation, planning and respondent selection phases. Gaskell (2000) notes there are two ways to go about in-depth interviews. First drawing from conceptual framework and proposition derived of it or the second approach of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I have adapted the former as the latter's theoretical foundation differs from my research approach.

The preparation stage will first have to answer two questions:

- 1) What to ask (the specification of topic guide)?
- 2) Who should I select as respondents?

### **4.8.1 Topic Guide**

The question what to ask is important because we don't want to be absolutely blank especially when we are meeting with top level decision makers. The interviewees wouldn't want to waste their time if they see this exercise as simply a chat. Besides a topic guide will also help the interviewer not to waste his time beating around the bush. So, time and effort has to be put in to develop this topic guide. The purpose of this topic guide is to achieve the aims of this research. Topic guide as it says, is not a structured regime that the interviewer has to comply by, but it is to facilitate the direction of the interview especially when the interviewer is lost for words. Also the topic guide will tailor the conversation towards reaching the aim of the research. The topic guide not only assist the interviewing process but also acts as an initial thematic scheme for the analysis of transcripts. Hence, the topic guide will be used in a flexible manner to accommodate the nature of the interviewee as well as the environment the interview is carried out. The topic guide for this study is derived from the main theme of this research: To understand the meaning of tourism destination image. The scope of this study is confined to what role is played by these various actors in contributing to the formation of tourism destination image of Malaysia. Regardless who the respondents are, the following themes were included in the topic guide:

- 1) Role, background and history of their organisation and themselves in relation to tourism. This questioning type can be considered as descriptive (Spradley 1979; Taylor & Bogadan 1984) and used to begin an interview.

The reason for this type of questioning is to make the interviewee feel comfortable (non-threatening) and allows them to talk about themselves and their experience.

- 2) Interviewees' opinion on the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the Malaysian tourism industry. The purpose of opinion/value based (Patton, 1980) questioning is to understand the cognitive and interpretive process of the interviewee. This mainly allows me to understand what the interviewer thinks about issues, events and experience surrounding the Malaysian tourism sector. Depending on the interviewing environment the SWOT theme was also tackled from a feeling and knowledge (Patton, 1980) based questioning approach. The feelings based questioning (what do you feel of .....SWOT) revealed the emotional responses of the interviewees. On the other hand the knowledge (what would you know of ..... SWOT) based questioning revealed the factual evidence.
- 3) Is 'Malaysia Truly Asia' an appropriate/successful tourism image in promoting and positioning Malaysia? This is a probing question (Minichiello, 1991) and is asked to elicit information more comprehensively as compared to the introductory question. This type of questioning gives the interviewer in-depth understanding of the subject matter as compared to make assumptions from the more general introductory questions.

- 4) Thailand and Singapore have a stronger tourism image than Malaysia in the Far East region. Do you agree to this statement and what are your reasons? This questioning approach - the Devil's Advocate Question (Schatzman and Staruss, 1973) should be asked only if a good rapport has been established between the interlocutors. The benefits of this type of question further strengthens and clarify the earlier statements made by the interviewees. These are more aggressive and provoking questions; thus should be handled with care to avoid discomfort between the interlocutors.

This topic guide as mentioned earlier has no hard and fast rule to it. It is merely to facilitate and give guidance in the data elicitation process. Hence, the interviewing environment will actually determine the flow of interview. Nevertheless, the absence of a topic guide will be like jumping into deep waters even without the theoretical knowledge of swimming.

#### **4.8.2 Respondent Selection**

The more challenging task in the data elicitation stage as compared to developing the topic guide is the selection of respondents. The word selection is preferred as compared to the word sampling in the context of this study. The reason being the scope of this study is not to collect representative samples but to identify links and to understand people's (actors/players) decision-making process with regards to tourism destination image. The purpose of this in-depth interview is not to count number of opinions but to understand the meanings of the range of opinions, representations and issues with

regards to the Malaysian tourism destination image. Therefore to claim of a specific approach in selecting the respondents would be inappropriate. Due to the nature of this study what is more essential is the detailed procedure and choices made to select these respondents.

At this point, it is important to reiterate the scope of this study before moving onto justifying the selection process. The earlier and later chapters deal with different actors (i.e. tourist, tour operators) and different assessment (i.e. media) of destination image; but this chapter – aims to understand people’s meaning on destination image. People here are tourism industry players who are top-level decision makers of their own sectors within the tourism industry spectrum. Due to confidentiality of interviewees, their names, organisation and designation will not be revealed explicitly through out my writing. What is known prior to the selection process is that industry players in tourism will be required to participate and these industry players are those at a management level where they make decisions, which directly or indirectly contribute to the formation of the destination image of Malaysia.

Snowballing (Cooper and Schindler, 1998) and theoretical sampling (Minichiello, 1991) are the combined selection procedures used which was inevitable in carrying out this research. Snowball sampling means the researcher through a referral network knows the respondent. For instance, my colleague who had established contacts in Malaysia referred the first respondent of this study to me. The only criterion that I was

looking for to start of this research was a person who had an in-depth knowledge of the Malaysian tourism scenario. Altogether there were 8 respondents who participated in this in-depth interview. Gaining information from the first respondent, gaps were identified to whom to speak next (or to which agency/department/organisation). This is when theoretical sampling was used. The nature of this study does not determine the number of respondents to be question in the initial design phase. Theoretical sampling plays two roles: first identifying the information gap to look for the following respondent. Second, to help determine the final respondent. This means the information gaps are filled and the research comes to a point of saturation. This is where the number of respondents will be finalised. The 8 respondents of this study include:

- Respondent 1, a representative from the National Tourism Organisation
- Respondent 2, a representative from the National Airport Management
- Respondent 3, a representative from the Public (Government) University
- Respondent 4, a representative from the Private University
- Respondent 5, a neutral representative who has a good understanding of the Malaysian tourism who is not a Malaysian and not employed by a Malaysian firm
- Respondent 6, a representative of the Malaysian tour operator
- Respondents 7 & 8, two representatives from the Malaysian National Tourism Organisation in the UK.

For ethical and confidential consideration the respondents will neither be explicitly named nor directly quoted as per the respondents request. However I will in my argument include references, which will be for an instance; stating Respondent 1 mentioned as such or respondent 2 disagreed with what Respondent 1 said. Most if not all the respondents are high-level policy/decision makers in their respective organisations. All the respondents have participated with plenty of enthusiasm and with openness in scrutinising and discussing the subject matter. All the respondents have allowed me to tape record the interviews and were kind enough to read through the transcribed document of the interview to provide validity to the content. All respondents agreed that their frank participation was due to the academic nature of the research. Nevertheless one similar request across all participants is to view this whole matter in a positive outlook rather than to negatively criticise an individual or organisation. Thus, my request to the reader of this research is also to treat the information provided with a positive manner and not be judgemental upon any weaknesses of an organisation or individual.

#### **4.8.3 Pragmatic Considerations**

Be a good craftsman [sic]. Avoid any rigid set of procedures. Above all seek to develop and use the social imagination. Avoid the fetishism of method and technique. Urge the rehabilitation of the unpretentious intellectual craftsman yourself. Let every man [sic] be his own theorist; let theory and method again become part of the practice of a craft (Mills 1959: 224)

The wise words of Mills above have been adapted and will be adapted throughout the writing of this chapter; as it is inevitable to deny, social science judgements are subjective, being coloured by the actors' own experiences. Thus, the following pragmatic choices are considered:

- The choice of in-depth interview and not other data elicitation technique
- The reliability and validity of this piece of work

Firstly, why in-depth interview and not group interview? The subjects involved are policy makers of various institutions. The respondents schedule is busy and they may feel uncomfortable even if they are brought together in a group interview. Thus, the nature of this research involving high-status respondents, provoking anxiety due to issues of particular sensitivity and the limitation of time has been a major factor of choosing in depth interview as opposed to group interview or any other data elicitation techniques.

Reliability and validity illustrates the degree of objectivity of a study. A study is considered reliable if and when repeated study yields the same answer. And a study is considered valid if and when the study provides accurate answers. Objectivity (both reliability and validity) can be easily measured and justified in a positivist approach. However, the issue of objectivity becomes more complicated in a social science study, where the techniques used are highly qualitative and subjective. Is qualitative research objective? Can qualitative research like in-depth interview reflect objectivity? These complexities have drawn interesting outlooks from various researchers. Abercrombie et



al. (1988) have debated that social science research cannot be objective mainly due the subjective and judgmental nature of social sciences, which is interpreted by the actors', own experiences. On the other hand, Kuhn (1970) argues that the same philosophy above not only applies for social sciences but to all forms of sciences. The argument of the likes of Kuhn (1970), Fay (1980) and Wadsworth (1984) is that objectivity is an aim or goal which is not really an achievable one and not necessarily desirable. This notion is further strengthened by Douglas (1971) by saying that the aim of objectivity in research is making knowledge shareable. Thus for the purpose of this research, objectivity will be attained through explicating the knowledge attained during the research process. Knowledge here means present knowledge, not past or future knowledge. This means the truth of the incident that occurred at the point of research. Thus, as long as the data is explicated well and thoroughly during the course of the research process, objectivity will be reflected. And the validity and reliability of the data should be based on these circumstances alone.

#### **4.9 Design Principles of empirical study on tourism dossiers (chapter 7)**

The design principle revolves around the case study approach. The purpose of the study is to reveal the meaning of images that is projected in tourism dossiers. And in the context of this study interest, the assessment will be on the Malaysian destination images that are projected in the tourism dossiers in the UK. To recap, this PhD thesis drawing from the conceptual and operational framework that has been presented in the earlier chapters, uses various approaches in addressing the understanding of the

meaning and measurement from the context of how Britons perceive Malaysia as a destination. Hence, semiotic analysis on media is one of the approaches and the one to be discussed in this chapter.

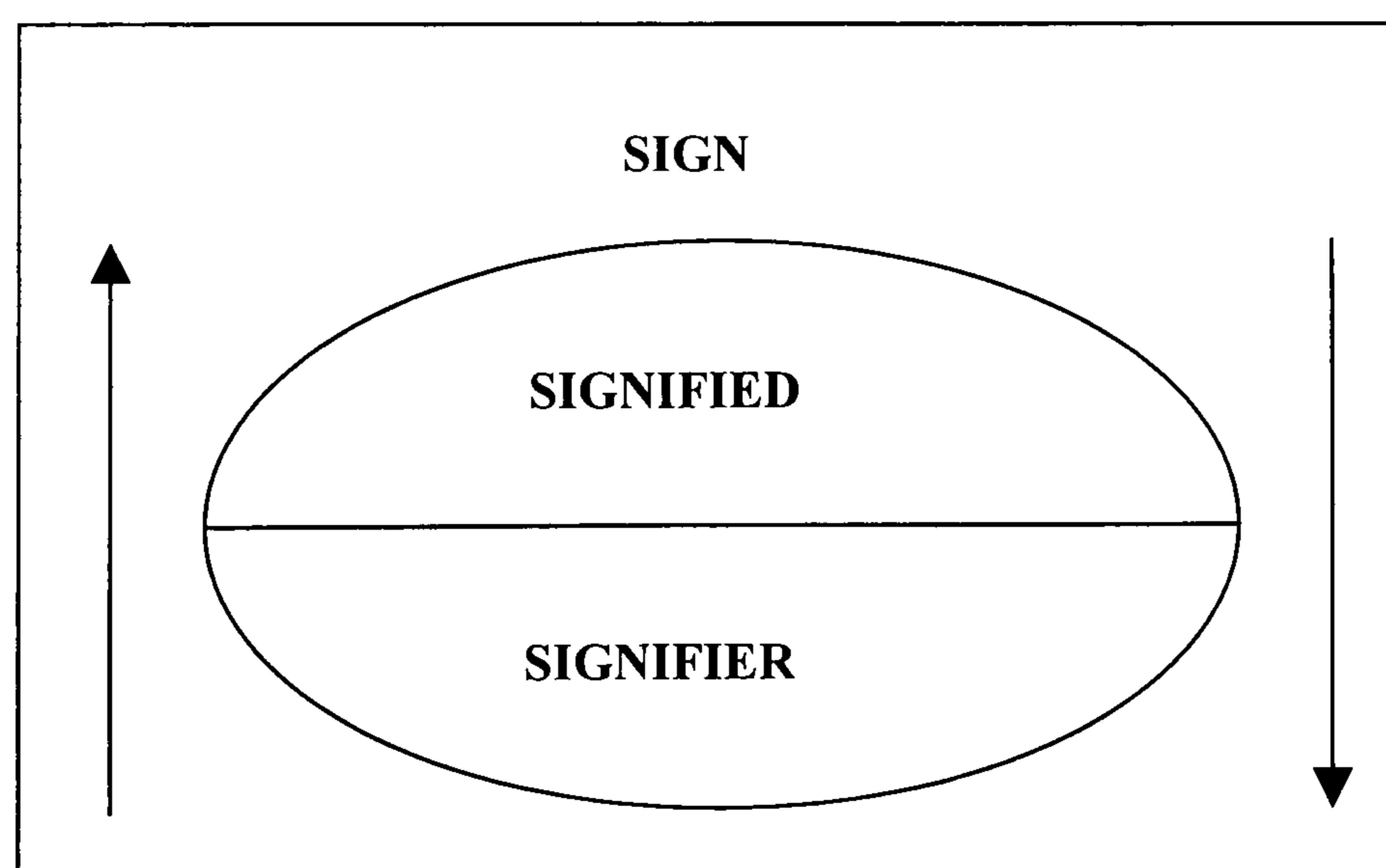
Why semiotics? To answer this, the underpinning philosophy will have to be discussed and understood first. Semiotics is a tool in addressing sign systems systematically. Signs in the context of this chapter include both visual and textual images of the dossiers. A Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and an American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) are the two prominent contributors, also to be considered as the founders to the study of signs (semiotics). Hence the ontology and epistemology of semiotics will draw mainly from linguistics and philosophy.

Before progressing further, here, I would like to reiterate, that the 'way of research' applied for this thesis is Synergistic Holism (Ramachandran & Liu, 2002). This thesis belief, to address the holistic nature of destination image, rules should not govern the process of search to resolve an issue. Hence, it should be the most suited approach that has to fit in to address the search of reality. Thus it is not an issue of positivist versus interpretivist or number versus words. The application of Synergistic Holism can be seen through the use of discourse analysis on industry players which holds a different world view as compared to this present chapter which we will see shortly holds a different word view. Similarly, the synergistic approach of various worldviews can be

seen in the assessment of travel advisers and tourist, which are very much a positivist approach.

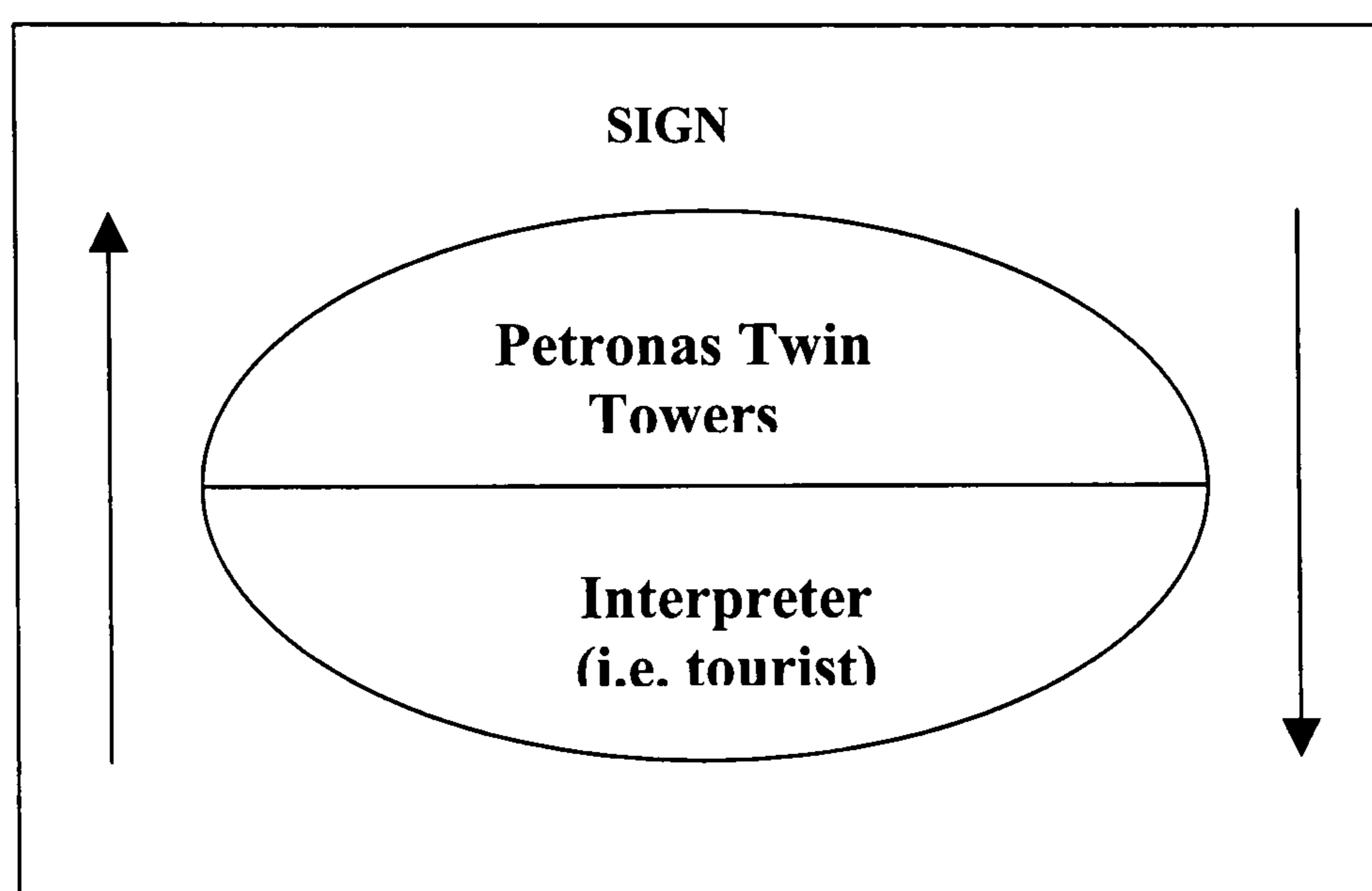
The above is just as a recap, now, moving back to semiology and its worldviews. The term semiology that originates from the Greek word *semeion*, which means sign; has been in use since ancient time (Noth, 1990) as means of communication and representation. Nevertheless, it is the works of Saussure (1916/1966) and Peirce (1934), considered as modern semiology that will be looked at for the purpose of this chapter. Firstly, Saussure's views are reviewed, who defines semiotics as a science that studies signs within society. Being a linguist, naturally, Saussure's primary focus in developing a semiotics framework revolved around the use of language. Saussure's dyadic semiotic model (Figure 4.9) discusses three components in a sign system:

- Sign,
- Signifier, and
- Signified



**Figure 4.9 Saussurean Dyadic Model**

Sign, according to Saussure, is the relationship between a signifier and the signified. Signifier means the form the sign takes. For the context of this chapter, this form is the image (whether textual or visual). And the signified is the concept that this form (image) represents. For better understanding, a representation of the above model is illustrated in a tourism context below.



**Figure 4.10 Saussurean Dyadic Model in a tourism context**

In figure 4.10, the signifier is the Petronas Twin Tower – the worlds highest building, and the signified or the person who interprets this can be a tourist (domestic or international), can be a tour operator, can be the policy makers or group of terrorist. For a tourist, this image may appear appealing in a similar fashion to Eiffel Tower, or a tourist may totally be ignorant of the fact that this structure exist, or for a mature tourist market like the European market, it is just another product of modernisation. On the other hand, for a domestic tourist and the policy makers, it could be a national pride

showing that Malaysia is capable of achieving the highest. And even worst, in the eyes of a terrorist, it may appear as an attractive spot to crash land an aircraft.

The interpretation of the above in a tourism context should be treated for the purpose of better understanding only at this juncture, since this adaptation tends to be materialistic as compared to Saussure's model, which is psychological in nature. From Saussure's linguistic view, both a signifier and the signified are mental constructions driven by human sensory as explained in Saussure's (1966) excerpt below:

A linguistic sign is not a link between a thing and a name but between a concept and a sound pattern. The sound pattern is not actually a sound; for sound is something physical. A sound pattern is the hearer's psychological impression of a sound, as given to him by the evidence of his senses. This sound pattern may be called a 'material' element only in that it is the representation of our sensory impressions. The sound pattern may thus be distinguished from the other element associated with it in a linguistic sign. This other element is generally of a more abstract kind: the concept.

Here, I would like to discuss on a number of issues pertaining to Saussure's model. Firstly on the worldview; Saussure's words speak of social construction and how the relationship in a sign is perceived and constructed. Then, Saussure introduces the element of the mind (mental images driven by sensory) creating the world. Hence, the 'reality' – the ontology of semiotics is viewed from a structuralism perspective. This worldview, in fact addresses the second issue that I would like to discuss. Going back to the conceptual framework, one of the elements that were unavoidable and rather challenging to tackle was the sensory element of image, which sat in the heart of the

conceptual framework. From a psychological standpoint, imagery is a sum of sensory activities, which is central in decision-making, whether the tourism services providers or the consumers. Hence, this ontology allows me to address one of the daunting research inquiries that emerged from the conceptual framework, namely; the psychological domain governed by the sensory element. The third issue that I would like to raise is that, Saussure's model requires adaptation as illustrated as in figure 4.10. For a simple reason, the act of tourist or the whole context of tourism itself is materialistic, thus, the notion of Saussure to view both the signified and signifier as immaterialist may not be suitable to illustrate the tourism context. The desire and the act of travelling to a place itself is a materialistic desire. The existing of the Petronas Twin Tower by itself is a physical object standing tall in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. So all these material elements can't be separated from the tourism context. Nevertheless, what is more important here is the arbitrariness of the sign (images). Images can be perceived in various manners depending upon the mental construct (driven by sensory) that an interpreter (i.e. a tourist, a local, and a terrorist) relates the sign (image) as. Hence, the epistemological standpoint of the challenges of semiotics is to uncover the underlying structure of meaning in the sign system. To achieve this, a broader semiotic context is required where 'semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as sign' (Eco, 1976) for instance, words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. The Peirce (1934) model which fits better to address this chapter, upholds the fact that 'a sign ... is something that stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity'.

Peirce in his structuralism worldview added that every thought is a sign. And this is explicated in Peirce's triadic model as in figure 4.11 below:

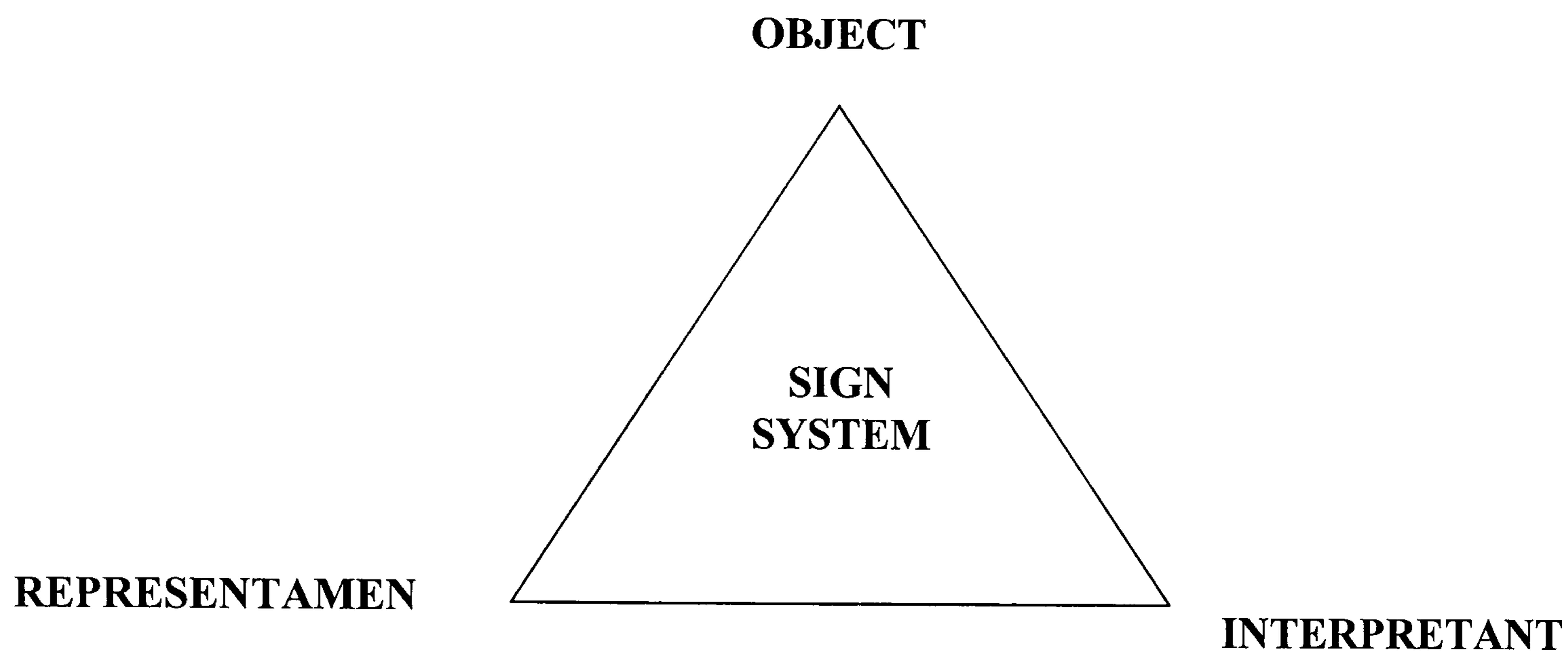
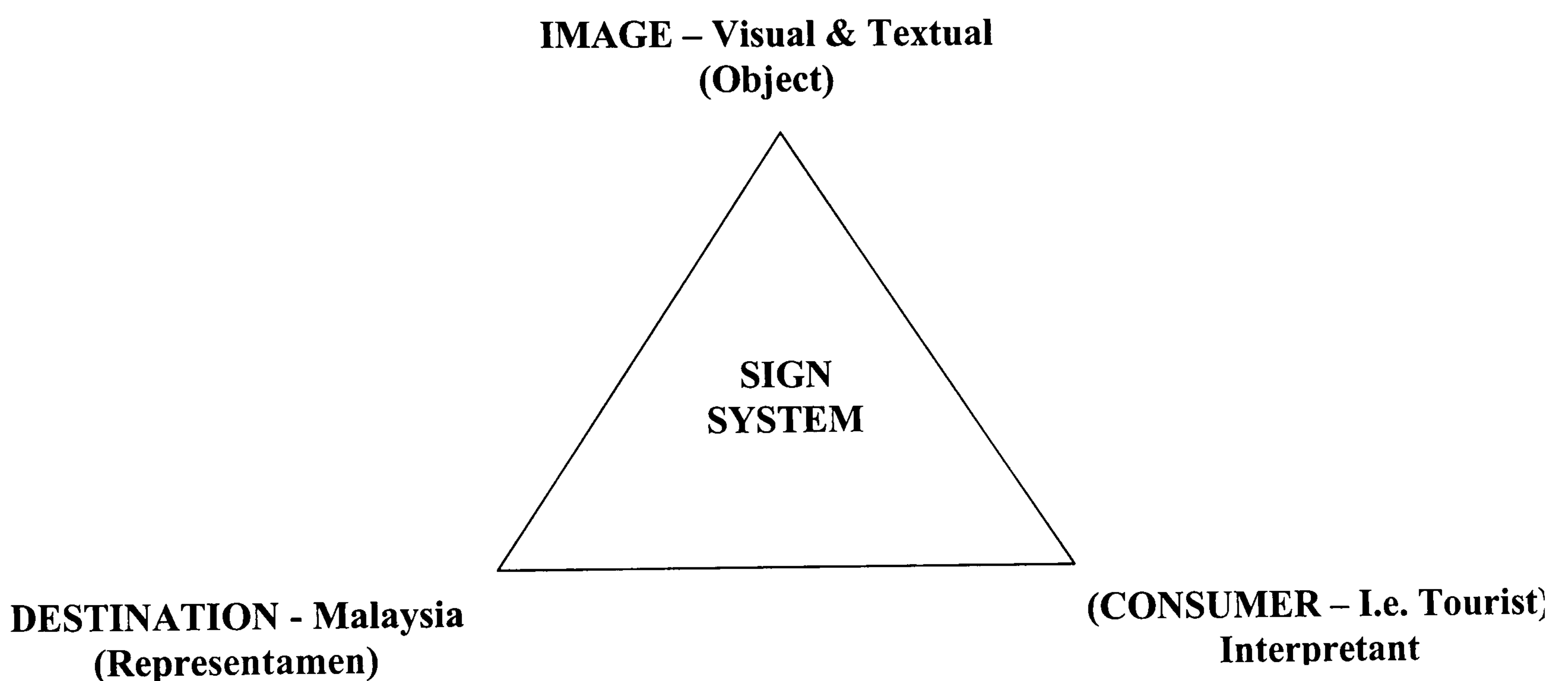


Figure 4.11 Peirce's sign system

Epistemologically, the three components ( representamen, object and interpretant) that form Peirce's semiotic model, aims to identify the codes and recurring patterns in a particular sign system, which is used to understand, construct and communicate meaning. As for explanation, *representamen* is the form, which the sign takes. *Interpretant* is the sense made of the sign though not necessarily the interpreter and an *object* is to which the sign refers. For instance the siren of an ambulance can be viewed as the *representamen*. The message that the sound of siren indicates that the vehicles, give way, slows down or stop for the ambulance to get pass the traffic is the *interpretant*. And the act of the vehicles stopping or giving way in itself is the *object*. The similarities between Saussure and Peirce are that *representamen* is similar in meaning with *signifier* and *interpretant* is similar in meaning with *signified*. The variation though stems from how *representamen* is explained: something that stands to

somebody for something in some respect or capacity. The difference here as compared to Saussure's model is that the *representamen* can be either material or immaterial. This is where Peirce's model fits better into the tourism context due to its' recognition of the material/physical component. And what clearly appears directly in Peirce's model as compared to Saussure's model is the *object* component, which adds on to the validity to use Peirce's model for the context of tourism.

Hence, Peirce's model as suggested by (Echtner, 1999) is adapted as the design principle for this chapter. The adapted model is illustrated as below in figure 4.12:



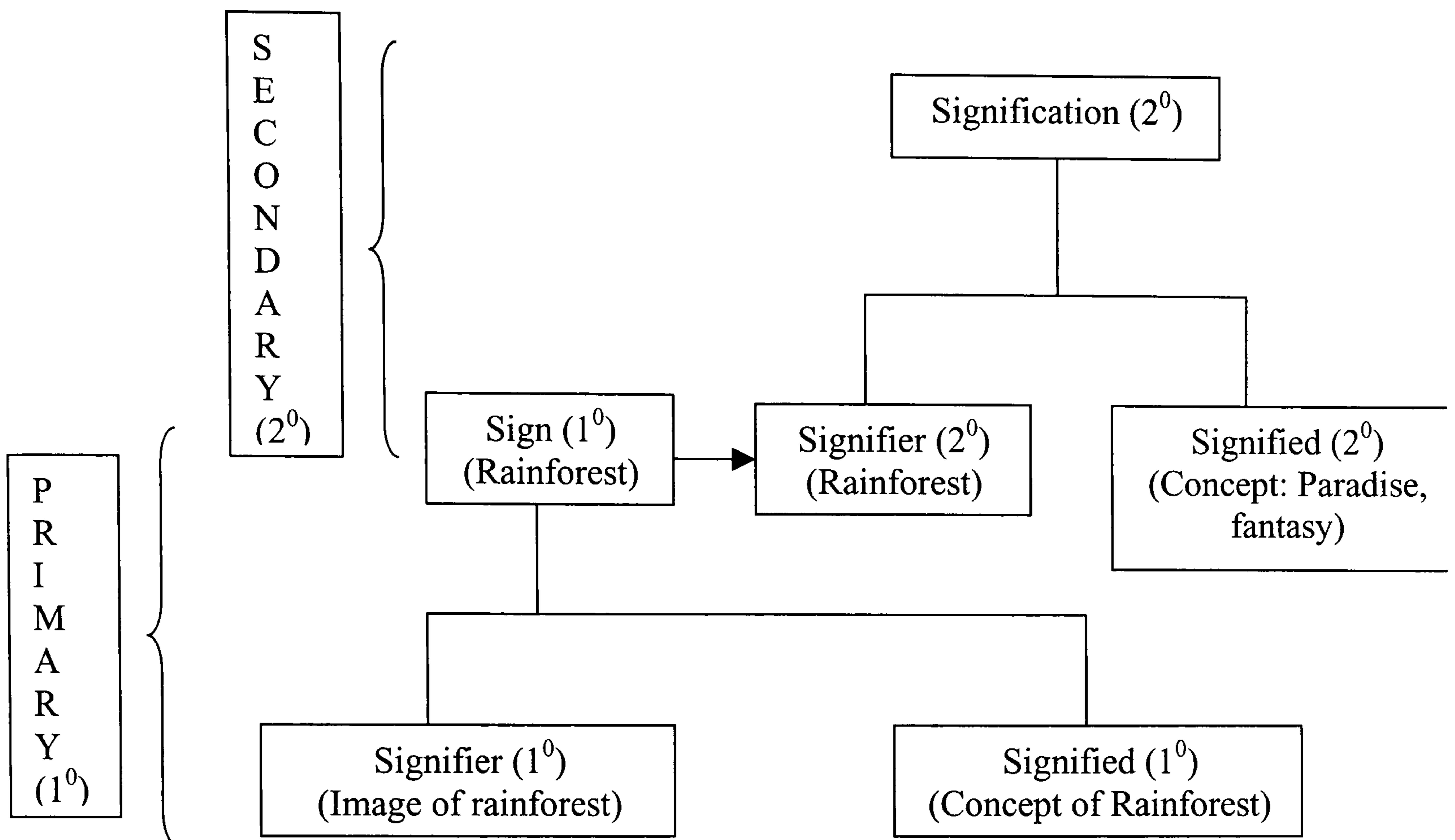
**Figure 4.12 Adapted sign system model for imagery studies.**

For the purpose of this chapter, *representamen* is the destination, which is Malaysia; that is the form of image that is represented. *Object* will be the visual and textual images that are represented in the dossiers. For instance, a textual line like 'long sandy



beaches', 'oldest rainforest' or visual images like the Petronas twin towers or the F1 circuit. *Interpretant* is considered as both the consumer (i.e. tourist) as well as the interpretation (sense made of the sign [i.e. image of Malaysia]).

In connection with the design principal, an additional element in semiotics is worthwhile to be considered to what has been discussed earlier. Building upon Saussure's model, Barthes introduces the primary and secondary systems in the levels of signification. In these levels of signification, Barthes, speaks of denotation, connotation and myth. Denotation according to Barthes, only requires linguistic and anthropological knowledge for readers to make sense of the subject. For instance, when an image (visual or textual) of a rainforest is shown, with denotation, a reader will be able to tell (conceptualise) there are trees, wild animals, it is green and has tropical climate. This interpretation is from an anthropological and linguistic angle. And denotation is the primary system in Barthes's spatial metaphor between the primary and secondary sign systems (figure 4.13).

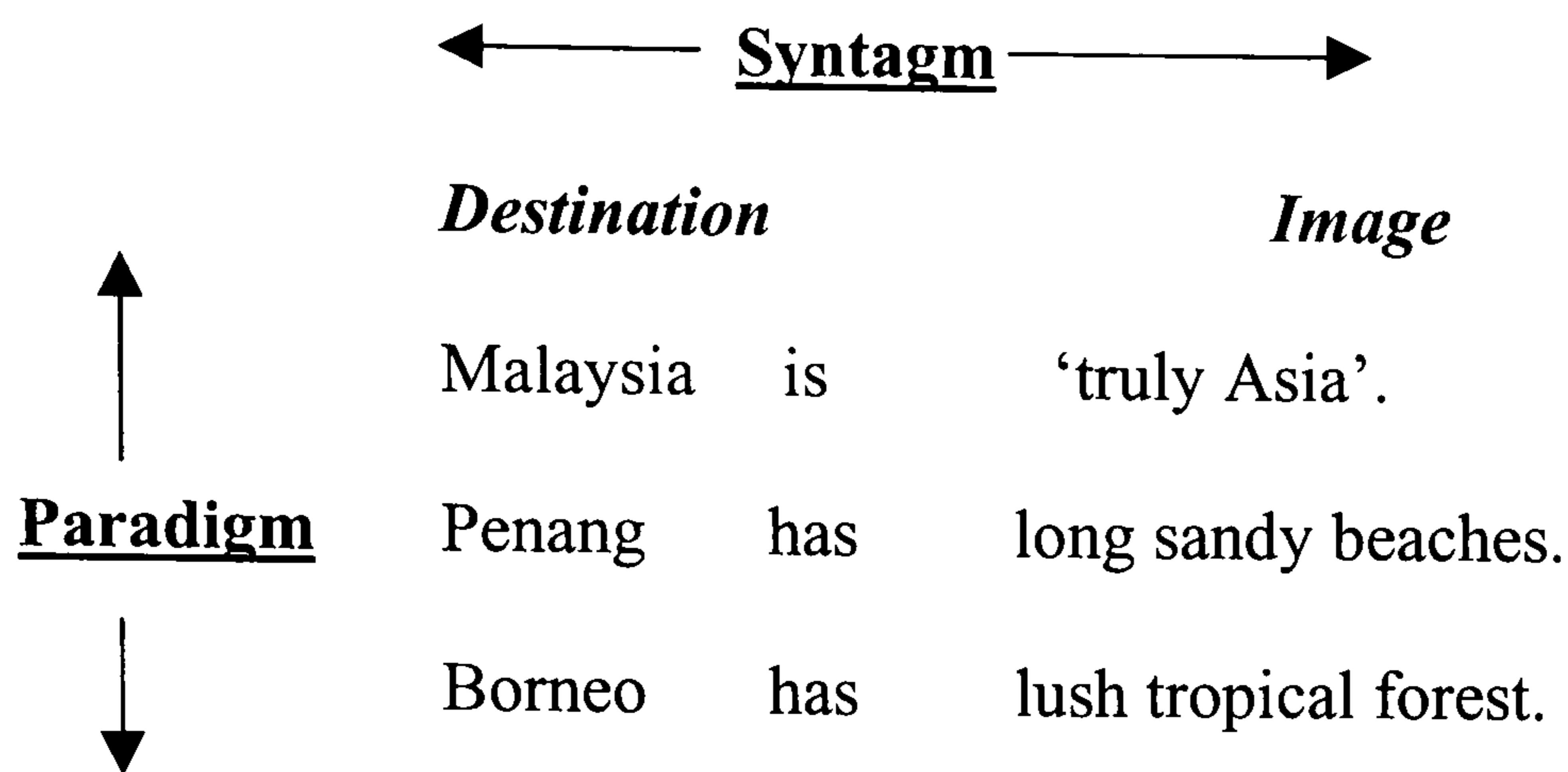


**Figure 4.13 Barthes's primary and secondary level of signification adapted in a tourism context.**

Solely from a denotation point, the marketers and advertisers of a destination may not gain much advantage, except maybe for the fact of creating awareness. But what is more interesting in the secondary level of signification is the probing into the deeper structure of meaning. Referring back to the above figure, what appeared to be a holistic sign system in the primary level of signification becomes empty in the secondary level. The rainforest being the initial sign (for primary level – denotation stage) now becomes a vehicle for signification (for secondary level – connotation stage). According to Barthes, the connotation level requires conventional and further cultural knowledge,

which he calls lexicons. Barthes explains that lexicon knowledge may be practical, national, cultural or aesthetic. And most importantly highlights the point that this knowledge has the interpretational freedom, where the meaning of image relies upon the knowledge available through experience and contextual salience. From a tourism imagery context, the secondary probing of Barthes to understand the deeper structure of meaning becomes an advertising tool for tourism marketers to create the myth that the consumer want to achieve as a dream or a fantasy. For, instance to travel to a tropical paradise getting the feel of the rainforest, at the same time, being pampered in the comfort of modern facilities and infrastructure and to be treated like a king by the service providers may be perceived by a commoner as a fantasy which can only be attained by the rich and famous (higher status society). These are the deeper structure of meaning that the tourism promoters play with to lure tourists to live their fantasised 'rich and famous' lifestyle during their holidays.

To achieve advertising success as mentioned above, promoters play with the use of language in two different ways, as Saussure identifies them as syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships. To understand and explain this relationship better, lets take the following (Figure 4.14) examples in a text describing the images of Malaysia:



**Figure 4.14 Syntagmatic-Paradigmatic relationship**

Referring to Figure 4.14, a paradigmatic relationship reflects both similarities and differences in a text. For instance, the paradigmatic has a vertical relationship. The similarities in this vertical axis are the categories of destination and image. Though categorically (destination) similar; Malaysia, Borneo and Kuala Lumpur, does not have a horizontal relationship, which makes the meaning. Hence the function of the horizontal axis (syntagmatic) is to combine words to make meaning. This linear combination is the one that creates and gives meaning for the image of a particular destination. And this linear combination is the one that normally promoters capitalise to fulfil the fantasy of a tourist. Hence a combination of syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationship will pave way to probe the deeper structure of meaning in a more holistic manner.

And my role and challenge as a new comer to this semiotic world, is to uncover the deeper meaning of images (visual and textual) of the dossiers through the design principles as discussed above.

#### **4.10 Data Elicitation of empirical study on tourism dossiers (Chapter 7)**

The data elicitation approach adapted for this study is through collection of document in the form of tourism dossiers from respective tour operators/travel agents. To recap, the purpose of this case study is to analyse the visual and textual images of Malaysia from the British tourists' perception. A wide range of media options was available for data elicitation purpose. The available options include; tourism dossiers, website (internet) promotions, television and radio advertisement as well as multimedia compact discs. Pragmatic considerations due to the constraints of time and resources in a PhD process has been one of the reasons to opt out and focus on the tourism dossiers of travel agents/tour operators. Another valid consideration was the accessibility of media material to the mass population; which would be the mass media that would reach most people who wish to travel. Though the World Wide Web is gaining popularity, but it is not what the majority of population use to gather information. If we look at television and radio, the advertisers will have to pay for airtime; and from my conversation with the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board officials; the funds allocation does not allow them to advertise during prime time when most audience are watching the television. The funding issue also limits the frequency of the promotions to be aired. And it is also evident in my findings from my earlier chapter on pilot study, that getting information from tour operators and travel agents dossiers still seem to be the method favoured by tourist to gather information prior to travel. And, so is the limitation of video compact discs where one requires a multi-media computer facility to

gain access. Based upon these considerations, the decision to concentrate on the dossiers was taken.

However, the collection of these dossiers was carried out systematically. A list of UK based tour operators/travel agent who promoted Malaysia actively was obtained from the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board in London. Contacts to request for dossiers were made to the 45 organisations through phone calls and Internet request (where available). Out of the 45, 3 organisations were web based therefore did not produce dossiers and another two organisation though promoting Malaysia did not have dossiers relevant to Malaysia, bringing down the population size of the organisation to 40. The response rate of the population is 47.5% whereby 19 of the 40 organisations responded by sending their dossiers on Malaysia. The data from these 19 dossiers are the ones used to conduct the semiotic analysis in chapter 7.

#### **4.11 Wrapping up the research process**

The purpose of this chapter had been to address the entire research spectrum: from philosophy to methods. The outcome of the philosophical journey and investigation is the envisaged Synergistic Holism as the underpinning philosophy to carry out the research process of destination imagery. Based upon this philosophy a mixed-method approach to capture the holistic image of Malaysia was formulated. Design principles and data elicitation techniques of the various methods applied were outlined. The following chapters are the continuity of this research process chapter that will translate

the methodological aspects of the research process into findings. The chapters includes chapter 5 that presents the findings of imagery from the perspectives of tourists and travel advisers, chapter 6 presenting imagery from industry players perspectives and chapter 7 presenting findings of imagery based upon assessment on tourism dossiers.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONSUMERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS: DIVERGENCE AND CONVERGENCE OF MALAYSIAN IMAGERY**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

The aim of this dissertation is to look into the meaning and measurement of destination image, in particular the destination image of Malaysia from a British perspective. Gathering from previous chapters namely, the exploratory and literature chapters, it is evident that to get a holistic view of a destination image, an assessment should comprise of all parties involved. Nevertheless, it is not possible for a single approach to address the complex and holistic nature of destination image. Hence the analysis chapter has been spread into three different chapters, in which one approach (chapter) complements the other. However, the scope of this chapter, which is the first among the three analysis chapters, looks into the buyer (tourist) of the holiday, the demand component and the supplier component; for the purpose of this chapter I have decided to go for the travel advisers (inclusive of travel agents and tour operators). Deciding the demand component, the tourist, is a straightforward decision since the needs, wants and demand is the fulfilment a buyer (tourist) is looking for, but why travel advisers when there can be a possibility of a wide range of suppliers (i.e. tourism board, airlines) involved. Drawing from the feedback of the exploratory study, it is found that travel advisers are the preferred choice (more frequently visited) of tourist as a point of reference to gain information prior to travel. To add on to that point, is the accessibility



and convenience a tourist would have walking into a high street shop, speak to an adviser (agent), or pick a brochure. Not everyone has the luxury and the ability to use other modes (i.e. internet) of accessing information. Travel advisers being the most preferred and accessible supplier were hence decided to be the supply component of this chapter.

As mentioned earlier, other contributing factors of imagery are not neglected, but will be addressed in the following two empirical chapters. The other two chapters will not only touch on the other industry players (Chapter 6), but will also look into the deeper structure (Chapter 7) of the meaning of image that appears in both textual and visual forms. As we are aware by now, the imagery study requires more than one approach or worldview (paradigm) to address its highly complex nature. So, this chapter will not try to attempt to address the whole range of complexity of destination image. As mentioned earlier, the gaps not addressed by this chapter will be addressed in chapters 6 and 7 and further detailed discussion of the gaps and how one chapter complements the other will be presented in the triangulation section of the final chapter. In brief, the purpose of this chapter, is to examine both the demand and supply nature of destination image; the demand component being addressed from the British tourists perspective whilst the supply component by the UK based travel advisers. Based upon the design principles and data elicitation technique as outlined in chapter 4, the analysis and findings of the convergence and divergence between tourists and travel advisers are presented below.

## **5.2 Data analysis and findings**

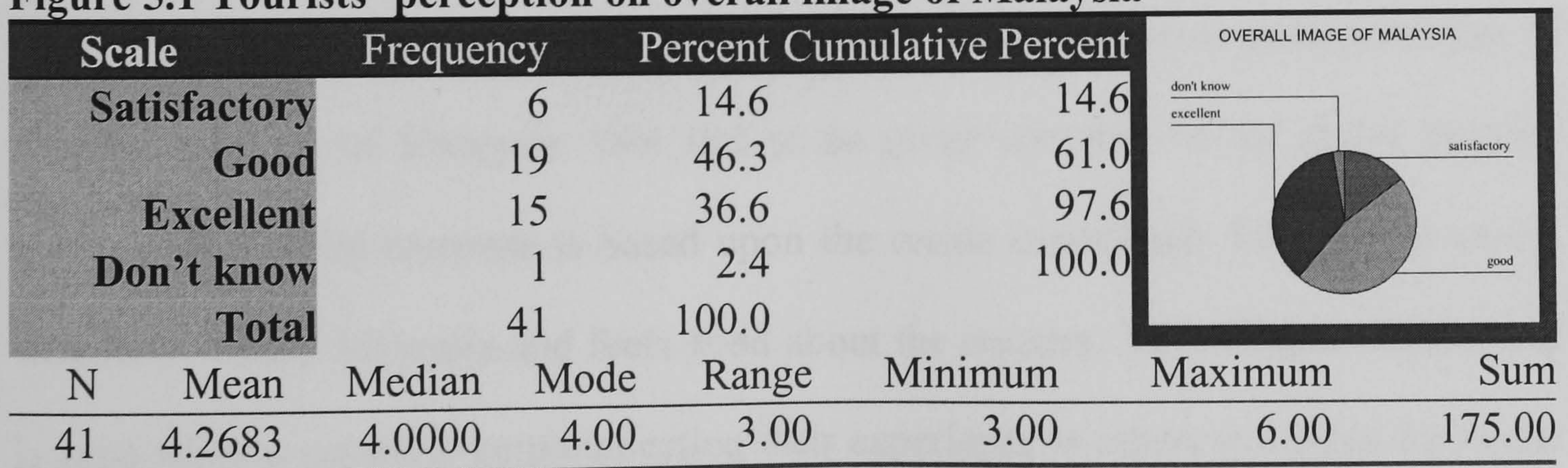
Having seen the challenges above, this section is about taking a non-probabilistic route and analysing the data with descriptive statistics tools in examining, assessing and drawing relationship among variables to understand the meaning of destination image of Malaysia from both the British tourists and travel advisers' perspectives. Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 10.0.1 is used as a platform for data coding and consequently the analysis of the data. The discussion of analysis and finding will be presented in a thematic order. However, before moving into the assessment of the thematic independent variables, the dependent variable (overall image of Malaysia) will be examined first as to see whether the image is favourable or not from the respondents' perspectives.

End of the day, what makes or breaks a successful destination image is to see whether the image is favourable or not. The attitudes of both the tourists and travel advisers on the overall destination image of Malaysia are examined and presented as figures 5.3 and 5.4 respectively. The scale of measurement includes 1 for terrible, 2 for poor, 3 for satisfactory, 4 for good, 5 for excellent and 6 for don't know/ not sure. The reason to measure and understand the overall image of Malaysia comes in two folds. Firstly, there may be a few independent variables (will be examined in the following sections), which reflects upon an unfavorable image of Malaysia. However, the response from the overall image will indicate whether these unfavorable images (from the independent variables) have actually had an adverse effect on the satisfaction, experience and image of both the tourists and travel advisers. The second purpose of assessing the overall

image is to cross-examine the findings against the demographic profiles of the respondents to get a picture of the potential market segment and their behavioural pattern. However, this will be discussed in detail later in the demographic section.

A point to keep in mind throughout the discussion of the findings is on the mean score. Although, a higher mean (average) score may reflect a positive image, this score should be treated just as an indicator and not accepted as a conclusive result. The reason being the sixth element on the scale (don't know / not sure) has the properties to provide an ambivalent image. The argument of including this sixth element is to give a clear picture as to whether the respondent is truly unaware of a particular variable. Very often when the don't know/ unsure choice is not given, the tendency of the respondent is to strike on the mid point of the scale, for instance satisfactory or average, which may not reflect the true perception. However it is not a major issue, as the mean score can be treated as an indicator and should be followed by the examination of the frequency of occurrence as per the measurement scale (i.e. counts of satisfactory, good, excellent, so on and so forth).

**Figure 5.1 Tourists' perception on overall image of Malaysia**

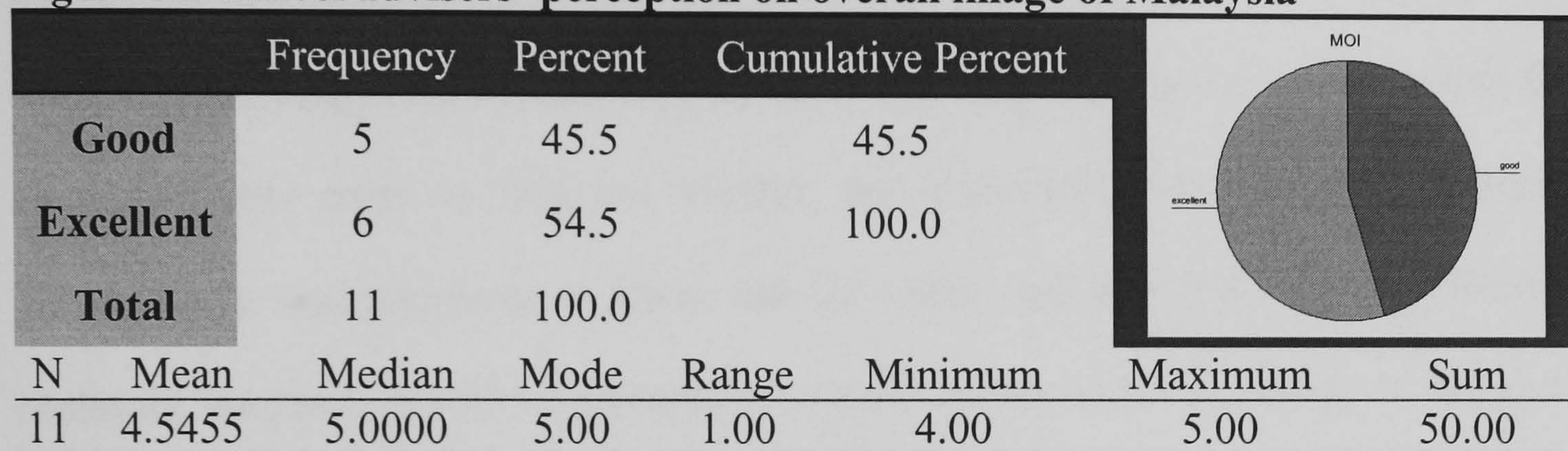


The statistical outcome of the tourists' perception of the Malaysian overall image as per figure 5.1 above looks very promising. The positive outcome of the above statistics is that Malaysia does not have an overall negative image (terrible and poor of the choice in the measurement scale not selected). However when a respondent says he/she is satisfied (14.6%) or don't know/not sure (2.4%), there is space for ambiguity. This ambiguity will have to be probed, identified and addressed; as this experience will translate into information either by word of mouth or any other means of communication. These information that contribute to the formation of image and consequently in decision-making may not be favourable for the Malaysian image; hence there is a possibility of losing the British tourists' market share. Although the ambiguity is not at an alarming rate (total of 17%), but these ambiguities that are not clearly visible at this point will be probed further in the forthcoming sections of independent variables examination. The total percentage (82.9%) of good and excellent alone reveals that the overall satisfaction of the tourists has exceeded their expectations.

This outcome is definitely good in terms of creating a positive image for Malaysia in future. People with good experience and great satisfaction will communicate to others of their positive experience, giving a helping hand in the promotion and positioning of a positive image of Malaysia. One fact to be given attention to the above positive outcome is that the response is based upon the onsite experience. That means tourist who have visited Malaysia and feels good about the country. This as mentioned above is good when it comes to communicating their experience to others as well as for repeat

visitation (customer/brand loyalty) if the tourist decided to go on another long-haul vacation. However, the statistics can't be generalized for the overall image Malaysia may have, if asked to a potential British tourist who has never visited Malaysia. This will be an interesting area to study in future since it is not within the scope of this study.

**Figure 5.2 Travel advisers' perception on overall image of Malaysia**



The statistical findings of travel advisers perception on the overall image of Malaysia as per figure 5.2 above seems even more promising than the tourists. Results show no ambiguity (satisfactory, don't know/not sure) and no negativity (terrible, poor). The overall image of Malaysia is perceived highly positive with 54.5% indicating excellent and the remaining 45.5% saying good. From a marketing, positioning and image formation angle, this is an excellent outcome. An adviser to sell/promote the product convincingly, will have to be positively convinced about the product first. Only then will the product have an advantageous image, where the adviser dose not have to provide a fake image just for the reason of selling the destination. When probed a step further, it was to my surprise that all the respondents that have participated in this survey has actually had hands on experience of Malaysia. These travel advisers have

actually visited Malaysia at least once (discussed further in the experience/perception theme later) either on their own effort or through the 'Megafam' programme (awareness creation programme by sponsoring travel industry players to Malaysia) jointly organised by the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) and the Malaysian Airlines (MAS). Either sponsored or self-sponsored, the indication is that the MTPB has actually formed strong partnership with industry players (in the UK) who believe strongly in selling Malaysia as a destination. Although it was within the context of this study to find out whether the respondents have been to Malaysia previously, it was surprising to know that the entire respondent actually had been to Malaysia. Anyhow, it will be interesting to know of the perceived image of Malaysia from a travel adviser views that have not been to Malaysia.

Moving on, the following sections will discuss the independent variables (divided into themes) that contribute to the formation of the dependent image (overall destination image) as discussed above.

## 5.2.1 Attractions

**Table 5.1 Tourists' statistics for the theme attractions**

Variables	Mean	Least Attractive	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Most Attractive	Don't know /not sure
A1	4.5122	0	0	4(9.8%)	12(29.2%)	25(61%)	0
A2	4.5610	0	0	1(2.4%)	16(39%)	24(58.6%)	0
A3	4.5122	0	0	1(2.4%)	20(48.8%)	18(43.9%)	2(4.9%)
A4	4.0000	0	5(12.2%)	13(31.7%)	10(24.4%)	3(7.3%)	10(24.4%)
A5	3.4878	0	4(9.8%)	17(41.5%)	17(41.5%)	2(4.9%)	1(2.4%)
A6	3.9512	0	3(7.3%)	17(41.5%)	7(17.1%)	7(17.1%)	7(17.1%)
A7	4.3902	0	0	5(12.2%)	15(36.6%)	21(51.2%)	0
A8	4.3415	0	2(4.9%)	5(12.2%)	15(36.6%)	15(36.6%)	4(9.8%)
A9	4.3659	0	2(4.9%)	13(31.7%)	9(22%)	2(4.9%)	15(36.6%)
A10	4.1463	1(2.4%)	9(22%)	9(22%)	3(7.3%)	2(4.9%)	17(41.5%)
A11	4.3415	1(2.4%)	1(2.4%)	7(17.1%)	12(29.3%)	14(34.1%)	6(14.6%)
A12	4.1707	1(2.4%)	4(9.8%)	15(36.6%)	4(9.8%)	1(2.4%)	16(39%)
A13	4.4146	0	0	4(9.8%)	19(46.3%)	15(36.6%)	3(7.3%)
A14	4.6829	1(2.4%)	4(9.8%)	6(14.6%)	5(12.2%)	5(12.2%)	20(48.8%)
A15	4.3659	0	1(2.4%)	8(19.5%)	15(36.6%)	9(22%)	8(19.5%)
A16	3.9024	2(4.9%)	7(17.1%)	9(22%)	9(22%)	3(7.3%)	11(26.8%)
A17	4.2683	0	0	3(7.3%)	26(63.4%)	10(24.4%)	2(4.9%)
A18	4.8780	2(4.9%)	4(9.8%)	5(12.2%)	1(2.4%)	3(7.3%)	26(63.4%)
A19	3.0244	5(12.2%)	10(24.4%)	14(34.1%)	7(17.1%)	1(2.4%)	4(9.8%)
A20	4.8293	1(2.4%)	0	7(17.1%)	10(24.4%)	2(4.9%)	21(51.2%)
A21	4.4634	0	0	7(17.1%)	13(31.7%)	16(39%)	5(12.2%)
A22	4.3659	1(2.4%)	3(7.3%)	6(14.6%)	13(31.7%)	6(14.6%)	12(29.3%)
A23	3.9512	0	1(2.4%)	11(26.8%)	20(48.8%)	7(17.1%)	2(4.9%)
A24	3.9024	0	5(12.2%)	11(26.8%)	16(39%)	1(2.4%)	8(19.5%)
A25	4.6585	2(4.9%)	1(2.4%)	5(12.2%)	9(22%)	8(19.5%)	16(39%)
A26	4.1951	0	0	7(17.1%)	19(46.3%)	15(36.6%)	0
A27	3.9024	0	3(7.3%)	13(31.7%)	12(29.3%)	11(26.8%)	2(4.9%)
A28	3.6585	2(4.9%)	1(2.4%)	17(41.5%)	15(36.6%)	1(2.4%)	5(12.2%)
A29	3.2683	1(2.4%)	7(17.1%)	23(56.1%)	5(12.2%)	0	5(12.2%)
A30	4.3415	0	5(12.2%)	10(24.4%)	8(19.5%)	2(4.9%)	16(39%)
A31	4.0976	0	2(4.9%)	8(19.5%)	19(46.3%)	8(19.5%)	4(9.8%)
A32	4.3902	0	1(2.4%)	5(12.2%)	20(48.8%)	7(17.1%)	8(19.5%)
A33	4.0976	1(2.4%)	1(2.4%)	15(36.6%)	10(24.4%)	4(9.8%)	10(24.4%)
A34	4.2683	0	2(4.9%)	8(19.5%)	14(34.1%)	11(26.8%)	6(14.6%)
A35	4.9268	1(2.4%)	1(2.4%)	7(17.1%)	6(14.6%)	2(4.9%)	24(58.5%)
A36	4.0976	1(2.4%)	3(7.3%)	7(17.1%)	18(43.9%)	4(9.8%)	8(19.5%)
A37	4.4146	1(2.4%)	5(12.2%)	6(14.6%)	10(24.4%)	2(4.9%)	17(41.5%)

In total, 37 (Table 5.1) and 16 (Table 5.2) independent variables for the theme attractions are measured for both the tourists and travel advisers respectively. All the 16 variables in the travel advisers will appear (not necessarily in a matching order, i.e. A1 of tourist need not be the same as A1 of the travel adviser) within the 37 variables of the tourists but not vice versa. Reference can be made to table 4.6 for the exact corresponding variable and its descriptions for both the tourists and travel advisers. Two considerations were taken for the reduced number of variables for the travel advisers. Firstly, the survey for the travel advisers will be conducted in the UK, which means there is a possibility that the respondent may not have been to Malaysia, hence will not be able to answer some of the variables that would have required their experience in Malaysia. These variables were removed based on experts' advice. The second consideration is a spin off from the learning curve of conducting the survey for the tourists first. Since, there will be questions with regards to the travel advisers' business operations, including all the variables as per the tourist questionnaire (resulting in a poor response rate) will make the survey form very lengthy. This may put off the respondent from participating, hence for this theme and the following themes some of the variable for the travel advisers have been omitted.

Approaching the statistics of this section, the measurement scale used for the theme attractions includes 1 for least attractive, 2 for below average, 3 for average 4 for above average, 5 for most attractive and 6 for don't know/not sure. The variables are discussed and compared (tourist against travel advisers for matching variables) based



on three criteria. The criteria are 1) favourable image, 2) ambivalent image and 3) unfavourable image. A response is considered favourable, when a particular variable has a high percentage of response for scores 4 (above average) and 5 (most attractive). On the other hand, if the frequency of scores 3 (average) and 6 (don't know/not sure) are high, then the variable will be considered as ambivalent. Thirdly, high percentage of scores in the region of 1 (least attractive) and 2 (below average) coupled with ambivalent response will reflect concern, thus will be considered as unfavourable image.

The variables (tourists' perception) that falls under the favourable image cluster includes A1 (Climate), A2 (Natural features), A3 (Flora/Fauna), A7 (Cuisine), A8 (Unspoiled Nature), A13 (Nature activity), A17 (Exotic atmosphere), A21 (Sandy beach), A23 Liveliness), A26 (Restful/relaxing), and A31 (Authenticity of tourism). A2, A3, A8 and A13 reflect that Malaysia has done a good job in developing, managing and sustaining a favourable 'eco' based image. The representation of this positive image should be considered actual and not perceived since the response is given with on-site experience. However, the contributing factor of well-positioned 'eco' products by the supply chain (travel advisers, NTO, transportation, accessibility, accommodation) should not be forgotten. This is reflected by the travel advisers' response (table 5.2) where A2 (Natural features) and A3 (Flora/Fauna) are considered to be a strong image. The good promotional and awareness building effort coupled with the actual abundance of natural features especially that of Sabah, Sarawak and Taman

Negara (National Park) is a positive point which should be managed properly for a sustained future of an 'eco' image. Climate is another positive attribute that both the tourists and travel advisers agree to. I suppose one need to experience Britain before could appreciate the Malaysian climate. The tropical rainforest climate of Malaysia, though can be humid, rainy and reach uncomfortable temperature during certain seasons, is blessed with 365 days of summer. This alone is a strong attraction and a good selling point for Malaysia to the British tourist who experience both wet and freezing winter. As long as greenhouse effect and global warming don't turn Malaysia into an uncomfortable destination, the climatic attraction will remain intact. Along with her year-long summer, Malaysia also is blessed with Mother Nature's geographical features, mainly the islands and peninsular that provides long sandy beaches. The long sandy beaches also come out as a favourite attraction from both the tourists and travel advisers perspectives.

One issue that should be given considerable thought is that what volume (visitors) are we looking at if we want to maintain and conserve these sandy beaches as clean and beautiful as it is. How much allocation should be given for resort development? Although amenities are essential, it should not be the cause of deterioration of an attraction. The concept of carrying capacity should be taken into consideration. The ripple effect of developing an attraction like the beaches is that, firstly, the resort infrastructure would take place-causing pollution to the beach during the construction phase. Then, the issue of over-supply of resort will make the industry to create more

demand hence, creating mass tourism. Then will come the issue of crowdedness, which will eventually cause the loss of authenticity and exotic atmosphere of a destination. At present the authenticity of tourism and exotic atmosphere appear to be favourable images from both the tourist and travel advisers perspective. Nevertheless, care should be taken since the variable crowdedness appears to be ambivalent amongst tourist as compared to the travel advisers who still find it favourable. Cities and shopping malls if visited at the peak hours can create discomfort due to crowdedness. Whereas natural areas inclusive beaches may still be spacious. So, depending upon the places the tourists have visited their opinion may vary, and this could be why the crowdedness variable is seen as ambivalent. In terms, of image any uncertain image is not good.

Thus, this should be taken as an indicator on how to better manage and distribute crowd. The favourable liveliness attribute must be maintained but without creating breathlessness or the feeling of crowdedness. . What layout/design should be good to cater for a large number of tourist and if the tourist traffic is less how to utilise the space economically? These are issues to be addressed from policy making to implementation and could be best achieved with proper networking and feedback amongst industry players. Hopefully, being proactive in addressing these issues will help maintain the favourable restful and relaxing image of Malaysia.

Diversity appeals attention and attention is good for attractions. Malaysia is not only abundant within the context of biodiversity but also rich from cultural context. The composition from three major ethnic groups of Malays, Chinese and Indians make

Malaysia a melting pot of Asian culture. The positive outcome of this cultural diversity is reflected by the favourable image of cuisine from both the tourists and travel advisers perspectives. The cuisines available not only has distinct individual flavour of its ethnic origin but also has evolved with some interesting fusions due to its long history of interaction amongst these cultures. This cultural diversity though has benefited from its by-product; cuisine, there are many aspects of this cultural diversity and heritage which appears to be neglected or not tapped into.

**Table 5.2 Travel advisers' statistics for the theme attractions**

Variables	Mean	Least Attractive	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Most Attractive	Don't know /not sure
A1	4.2727	0	0	0	8(72.7%)	3(27.3%)	0
A2	4.000	0	0	3(27.3%)	5(45.5%)	3(27.3%)	0
A3	3.8182	0	0	5(45.5%)	3(27.3%)	3(27.3%)	0
A4	2.6364	0	4(36.4%)	7(63.6)	0	0	0
A5	2.9091	0	4(36.4%)	4(36.4%)	3(27.3%)	0	0
A6	3.9091	0	0	3(27.3%)	6(54.5%)	2(18.2%)	0
A7	3.0909	0	2(18.2%)	8(72.7%)	0	0	1(9.1%)
A8	4.1818	0	0	2(18.2%)	5(45.5%)	4(36.4%)	0
A9	4.4545	0	0	1(9.1%)	4(36.4%)	6(54.5%)	0
A10	3.5455	0	1(9.1%)	3(27.3%)	7(63.6)	0	0
A11	3.7273	0	0	6(54.5%)	2(18.2%)	3(27.3%)	0
A12	4.2727	0	0	1(9.1%)	6(54.5%)	4(36.4%)	0
A13	3.3636	0	2(18.2%)	5(45.5%)	2(18.2%)	2(18.2%)	0
A14	4.1818	0	0	1(9.1%)	7(63.6)	3(27.3%)	0
A15	3.5455	0	1(9.1%)	4(36.4%)	5(45.5%)	1(9.1%)	0
A16	3.7273	0	0	4(36.4%)	6(54.5%)	1(9.1%)	0

Speaking of cultural diversity and heritage, Malaysia not only has the Asian connection, but also the European intervention. The Portuguese, the Dutch and the British have ruled Malaysia (then Malaya) one after the other since 1511 until 1957

before given independence by Britain. In these 446 years, the only time the European community did not rule Malaysia was when the Japanese invaded and occupied during the Second World War. Unfortunately, with 400 over years of European and probably 1000 over years of Asian connection, the variables; historic/heritage, artistic/architectural, traditional arts and cultural precinct yet falls under the cluster of ambivalence and unfavourable amongst both the tourists and travel advisers. This is of major concern especially when the travel advisers who play an influential role in creating and promoting the destination image of Malaysia themselves feel not convinced with the cultural/heritage attributes. To begin with, it appears that Malaysia does not have proper agency to administer, manage, and preserve the heritage and cultural site. There is a possibility that at policy level, the tourism and heritage ministries may play a role. However, what is lacking is the implementation. For instance, the historic buildings in Malacca being ripped apart for other project purposes (i.e. building an apartment) without being questioned or noticed neither by any authorities nor the public.

An establishment like the Historic Scotland will be required to oversee the management and preservation of these historic sites. An authority with calibre that will be able to even question the highest level of other authorities is required if the preservation of historic sites is to be successful in Malaysia. And even better if the public's awareness is created of the importance of these historic sites and this awareness becomes a loud voice when such unwanted destruction of heritage sites takes place. There are signs that

such uncalled activities could be due to either patriotism for the nation or even deeply rooted hatred towards the colonial past. Renaming 'Pitt Street' to 'Jalan Kapitan Keling' does not appear like a sign of patriotism. This is an act of manipulating history. If the historical facts that the European colonist were cruel, ill-treated the locals, reaped the locals economic benefits and treated the locals like slaves are true; the historical fact that these same European colonists brought modernisation in the shape of transportation, communication, infrastructures, roads, railways are also true. Therefore, renaming or destroying these attributes would only manipulate but not change the truth.

Pride of patriotism should come from history or feat that are self-created by the nation. For instance the new government administration centre – Putrajaya, the Petronas twin towers are all genuine products of Malaysia as a nation. And to provide local names to these products are perfectly fine and to be proud of. Besides failing to capitalise on the colonial past as a favourable image to tourists, to some extent Malaysia has also failed to address the heterogeneous society of Malaysia. For instance, if equal emphasis had been given in portraying a Buddha statue, a Hindu temple, a mosque, a church and Chinese temple, this diversity would have attracted people of all walks of faith and belief to see the harmony within this diversity. But there has always been a tendency in promoting a homogenous society, which may not be attractive as opposed to portraying a 'spicy mix'. Anyhow the scenario is slowly changing (present campaign – 'Malaysia Truly Asia'), but lets hope it changes for the good and continuity is sustained in this effort to promote cultural diversity.

Other variables that are unfavourable includes amusement park, entertainment, adventure activity, night life, adult entertainment, alcohol availability, urbanisation, small towns and merchandise qualities from the tourists perspectives and attractiveness of cities from the travel agents perspectives. Of the above, the major concern is that of attractiveness of cities, which appears as ambivalent amongst tourists and unfavourable amongst the travel advisers. This draws a correlation of how a variable if not convincing enough from a supplier's perspective can have an adverse effect on the buyers (tourists). Kuala Lumpur for instance does not have the attractiveness of Paris with its Eiffel Tower or Sydney with its Opera House. Probably the move to have the tallest building (the Petronas Twin Tower) can enhance the image of the City in the long run. Anyhow, emphasis should be given on how to make just not Kuala Lumpur but other cities like Georgetown (Penang) and Kuching (Sarawak) more attractive so that Malaysia does not lag behind in capturing the market segment that gains satisfaction from attractiveness of cities. As for amusement parks and adventure activity, it depends on the initial choice tourist make on what holiday type they want. Probably access or availability of these activities was not easily reachable by tourist, which can be a draw back. This is an issue of what image Malaysia wants to promote to the British. It is a question of return on investment. Is there a large enough market for the tourism board to heavily promote the adventure and amusement park component in the UK? For instance the Middle East market comes for amusement park activities to the Sunway Lagoon Resort, and a lot of Singaporeans go to Genting Highlands Resort for casinos. It boils down to which market segment is lucrative to which attraction.

Anyhow with the indication, of British tourists' interest in these areas, the Malaysian Promotion Board should keep their eyes open on whether the consumption pattern of British tourist are changing and when exactly to move in to tap this market segment.

The variables urbanisation, small towns and merchandise quality relates to the status of Malaysia as a developing nation. The urbanisation process in Malaysia looks disorganised and the volatile economic situation has not helped this situation. This is a phase, a developing nation has to go through and nothing much can be done to make it more attractive until the urbanisation process actually settles in. Nevertheless, innovative ideas like putting a big banner in front of the construction work that takes place on a restoration work will make the working area look more presentable. When a nation concentrates so much on modernisation and urbanisation, the tendency is always there to neglect the small towns though these small towns may have attraction capabilities to bring in tourist and generate income for the local economy. Tourists visiting Malaysia may find there is a big gap on the facilities and amenities available in cities as compared to small towns, which eventually makes the image of these small towns inferior, hence, less attractive. The role of local council, state government as well as the NTO, has a role to play in highlighting these issues to the policy makers. These are potential areas if developed properly can provide an added advantage for Malaysia as a tourist destination. A developing nation requires foreign workers and some of these foreign workers make a good livelihood by selling products that look real but are not. The ambivalent image of fake product and the unfavourable image of merchandise



quality have some correlation. The ambivalent image of the fake product shows that some tourist actually enjoys buying the fake products or they don't know of the availability of these fake products. Statistics show that more than 40% of the respondents find that the fake product as attractive and more than 30% of the respondents find the merchandise quality just average. Obviously fake products and quality don't go hand-in-hand. Thus it is up to the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) to decide the type of image they want to portray when it comes to shopping/merchandising. At present the illegal activities like the distribution of pirated Compact Discs are seen as a major crime and enforcement is taking place to curb these activities. So, the direction is to have a clean image, which would enhance the quality of product/merchandising that in the long run to produce a designer merchandising image. Whether it is good or will be successful depends on the demand of the tourist as well as how Malaysia wants to portray herself.

Entertainment, adult entertainment, alcohol availability, and nightlife are perceived to be unfavourable by tourists whereas the entertainment variable provides an ambivalent image amongst the travel advisers. Not all unfavourable images mean bad. Malaysia has always taken a secular stance with moderation. Developed countries that practice freedom without boundaries are already facing problems especially among youths who become addicted to alcohol and drugs. Malaysia allows entertainment but with limitation so that the social problems can be under control. Besides that, when a tourist visits a destination, they would want to experience the culture of that destination. By having too much of this fun element, locals will end up behaving like tourists and this

itself will be detrimental in attracting future tourists. The fact is these unfavourable variables are available; it is just that the level of freedom to enjoy these variables may not be as similar to some other destination that may offer. Hence, Malaysia's policy of prioritising the goodness of their citizens before tourists must be welcomed.

The other ambivalent images amongst tourists are commercialisation (due to the developing nature of the nation as discussed above), special events, water activity, national parks, filming, open space, family holiday, children friendly and product originality. As for the travel adviser, the remaining ambivalent image includes family holiday and product originality.

In terms of special events, water activity and national park there is no major concern. These variable are available, it is just that special events like the commonwealth games or F1 can't be provided all year through. A particular festival celebration can only take place on a certain season. Therefore, the respondents either have not come across these variable during their visit or simply did not know about the existence of these variables. However, what should be noted here is that there may be a slack in terms of awareness creation of these variable or even lacks information with regards to these variables. Hence, it is worthwhile to probe into this matter on what is the actual status, and if it is as suspected above then measures have to be taken to rectify it.

Besides that, innovatively creating events for the tourist will do no harm, though there may be a question of originality, but a tourist spending thousand of pounds definitely would not mind observing something similar of nature since the actual is unavailable. On a different note, filming/movie making has been an attraction factor for tourists. The film set, Lord of the Rings is being utilised to attract tourists to New Zealand. Similarly the movie 'Braveheart' has portrayed a beautiful, scenic and rustic image of Scotland. Malaysia has also benefited from the movie industry but mainly of the Indian film industry. However, the filming of 'Entrapment' portraying the Petronas Twin towers are ways of utilising the filming variable to attract tourist. This is a potential area and Malaysia should make effort to strike a partnership to a filming project as big a magnitude of 'The Lord of the Rings'.

The other ambivalent image open space comes as a small surprise. This issue relates to crowd management and planning/design of an attraction. For instance, Malaysia has abundance of long sandy beaches. If only one part is concentrated for development, then the issue of space definitely would cause problems. Hence, planning and development should be given good consideration when intend to develop an attraction. And if the attraction is already in existence, then creative/ innovative ideas should be incorporated on how to disperse and distribute crowd into different direction so that the tourist don't encounter a breathlessness environment. The family/ children variables are perceived to be ambivalent by both the tourists and travel advisers. Firstly, not all

tourist would have travelled in a family/children environment, thus may not have noticed the availability or the necessity of having a family friendly attraction. Those who had travelled with family and visited resorts and the cities would have had a favourable image as the availability of family friendly facilities and amenities may not have been an issue. However, the lesser rated resorts/hotels and remote countryside and small towns would have created a bad impression when it comes to family friendly facilities, for instance feeding room or baby changing facilities. This is something the tourism industry as a whole will have to look into and develop some standards that should be set for tourism service delivery.

The final component of the attraction variable; product originality also has an ambivalent image from both the travel advisers' and tourists perspectives. This is mainly due to product homogeneity. For instance, Thailand will be able to match attribute to attribute that is offered by Malaysia, whether it is climate, pricing or other variables. Tourism has moved away from its infancy stage where in the early days tourist were just interested in arriving at a new destination and take lots of photographs. Tourists have become more sophisticated. To compete and win tourists, the added advantage of a tourist to decide to come to a destination will have to be capitalised. Now are the days where, the aura, ambiance, good feeling, exotic feeling and simply different experience altogether has to be provided. In short, psychological advantage will be a key element in winning over tourist. Hence to be competitive, and remove and

ambivalent product image, Malaysia will have to work more into the softer tourism component; the psychology of tourism.

### 5.2.2 Health and safety

The health and safety theme consists of 8 and 5 variables for the tourists (Table 5.3) and travel advisers (Table 5.4) respectively. The discussion of this section will be on a similar tune as the previous section where the favourable, ambivalent and unfavourable images will be highlighted and compared where relevant (when same variable for both tourist and travel advisers).

**Table 5.3 Tourists' statistics for the theme health and safety**

Variables	Mean	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know /not sure
H1	3.7805	0	7(17.1%)	7(17.1%)	17(41.5%)	8(19.5%)	2(4.9%)
H2	3.0976	2(4.9%)	14(34.1%)	9(22%)	12(29.3%)	2(4.9%)	2(4.9%)
H3	3.8293	1(2.4%)	2(4.9%)	11(26.8%)	20(48.8%)	3(7.3%)	4(9.8%)
H4	3.9756	0	2(4.9%)	6(14.6%)	26(63.4%)	5(12.2%)	2(4.9%)
H5	4.3659	0	2(4.9%)	3(7.3%)	22(53.7%)	6(14.6%)	8(19.5%)
H6	4.3659	2(4.9%)	4(9.8%)	7(17.1%)	9(22%)	2(4.9%)	17(41.5%)
H7	3.7561	2(4.9%)	2(4.9%)	13(31.7%)	17(41.5%)	1(2.4%)	6(14.6%)
<b>H8</b>	4.0976	0	0	6(14.6%)	26(63.4%)	8(19.5%)	1(2.4%)

None of the 8 variables as perceived by tourists on the health and safety theme shows a strong favourable image. There's spread in the respondents' attitude. Variables H1 (clean destination), H3 (Food & Beverage hygiene), H4 (Political stability), H5 (racial prejudice [tourist and local]) and H8 (overall safety) reflect more than 50 % of the respondents indicating (agree and strongly agree) a positive attitude toward the

respective variables. Nevertheless, there is some grey area where some of the respondents find it either unfavourable or ambivalent. The variable clean destination is on the positive end for the travel advisers hence good from a selling point of Malaysia as a destination. However, some of the tourist disagree or feels undecided of the clean image of Malaysia. As a developing country, not all parts of Malaysia will have efficient local councils attending to the cleanliness needs. The humid and frequently wet climate does not help this situation either. For instance for someone who lives in Britain, the dry and cool climate provides an environment that does not stink even if it is dirty. Whereas in Malaysia the environment makes way for fast deterioration hence a rotten environment is inevitable if efficient cleanliness is not maintained. Thus, authorities and council will have to look into this matter on how to improve efficiency to maintain a clean environment.

Similarly, food and beverage hygiene that is favourable amongst the travel advisers appears to create some reservations amongst the tourists. As long as the tourists is within a resort environment, the standards will be high, hence the quality satisfactory. But, from a British viewpoint, the tourists may not find the hawkers on the street practicing high hygiene standards when preparing food. Local councils can educate and create awareness to these hawkers to practice higher hygiene standards, but authorities and agencies providing license to these hawkers will actually have to enforce the policy.

Political stability on the other hand has been perceived as favourable amongst both tourist and travel advisers. In an era where Malaysia's neighbouring countries are facing political turmoil, this variable can be utilised cleverly as a strategic advantage to lure more tourists to the country. Majority of the tourist did not encounter any racial prejudice from the locals that shows that the locals are warm and welcoming. This is an attribute that has to be continued; otherwise possibilities are there that neighbouring countries with similar Asian value will have an upper hand. However when asked of the overall safety of Malaysia, both tourist and the travel advisers has a positive attitude. Hence, effort should be made to erase the tiny hiccup causing the ambivalence.

**Table 5.4 Travel Advisers' statistic for the theme health and safety**

Variables	Mean	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know /not sure
H1	4.0909	0	1(9.1%)	1(9.1%)	5(45.5%)	4(36.4%)	0
H2	4.2727	0	1(9.1%)	0	5(45.5%)	5(45.5%)	0
H3	3.7273	0	0	3(27.3%)	8(72.7%)	0	0
H4	3.5455	0	2(18.2%)	3(27.3%)	5(45.5%)	0	1(9.1%)
H5	4.4545	0	0	0	6(54.5%)	5(45.5%)	0

Malaysia, having a rich ethnic mix, must show harmony amongst these different groups for tourists to feel safe to be in this destination. Hence, when the issue of prejudice amongst local ethnic groups was raised, although most respondents answered don't know/ not sure, yet more than 10 % showed their disagreement. This is not a good indication because in this era of globalisation and knowledge economy, people would want to visit countries that exercise freedom and equal rights across all racial and

ethnicity boundaries. Though it does not look serious, but care should be taken as this may not only effect the tourist flow, but in the long run may create an adverse impact on multi national tourism companies who would want to invest in Malaysia.

However, the more alarming variable that needs to be addressed is that of sanitation practice where almost 40% of the tourists revealed their dissatisfaction of the sanitation practice. One of the issues that may cause this problem is manpower shortage where in places like the international airport, contracts are given to specialist agencies to bring in their workers to keep the environment clean. But not all agencies have the luxury to outsource this task and many locals don't seem to be too keen on getting their hands dirty, hence depending on foreign workers to solve this issue. Beside the manpower shortage, it is also the ' I can't be bothered' and laid-back attitude of the locals that makes the sanitation facilities like the public toilets always remain dirty. Effort to inculcate civic consciousness should be top on priority if this issue is to be tackled. The sanitation problem is also due to the poor town planning where development takes place without proper drainage and sewerage outlets. More stringent supervision in term of providing license to developers should be taken so that these issues are handled from the very beginning and patching up bad development can be avoided.

The rise of September 11, Bali Bombing and other terrorism activities would have contributed in the stance taken by both the travel advisers and tourists when answering the question on terrorism. Malaysia's image with the predominance of Islamic population does not help the situation. Both the tourist and travel advisers had only less



than 50% agreeing that Malaysia may be free from terrorist activities. The undecided ones would have thought that no place on earth is actually free from terrorist activities. What is more concerning, though small in percentage, is that those travel advisers and tourist who disagree that Malaysia is free from terrorism. This is a truly negative image and can cause major disruption in travel patterns and tourist receipts. Hence the Malaysian government plus the tourism board have to work along to make sure public relations activity takes place to remove this negative image. Some of the efforts done by the tourism board includes flying in travel advisers and media people from the potential target market to give a first hand experience of the actual situation in Malaysia. It is therefore hoped that the exposure to the promoters and journalists who come on this sort of a familiarisation programme will write good about Malaysia, hence creating a positive image.

### 5.2.3 Facilities

**Table 5.5 Tourists' statistic for the theme facilities**

Variables	Mean	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know / not sure
F1	4.4634	0	0	3(7.3%)	20(48.8%)	14(34.1%)	4(9.8%)
F2	4.2439	0	2(4.9%)	2(4.9%)	21(51.2%)	16(39%)	0
F3	4.1220	0	1(2.4%)	8(19.5%)	18(43.9%)	13(31.7%)	1(2.4%)
F4	3.9024	0	4(9.8%)	11(26.8%)	14(34.1%)	9(22%)	3(7.3%)
F5	4.1707	0	2(4.9%)	6(14.6%)	18(43.9%)	13(31.7%)	2(4.9%)
F6	4.3415	0	2(4.9%)	3(7.3%)	17(41.5%)	17(41.5%)	2(4.9%)
F7	4.2683	0	2(4.9%)	6(14.6%)	20(48.8%)	5(12.2%)	8(19.5%)
F8	5.5854	0	1(2.4%)	3(7.3%)	1(2.4%)	2(4.9%)	34(82.9%)
F9	4.7805	0	2(4.9%)	5(12.2%)	13(31.7%)	1(2.4%)	20(48.8%)
F10	4.9756	0	1(2.4%)	5(12.2%)	10(24.4%)	3(7.3%)	22(53.7%)
F11	5.5366	0	0	4(9.8%)	3(7.3%)	1(2.4%)	33(80.5%)
F12	4.2195	0	1(2.4%)	7(17.1%)	23(56.1%)	2(4.9%)	8(19.5%)
<b>F13</b>	<b>5.4878</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1(2.4%)</b>	<b>3(7.3%)</b>	<b>4(9.8%)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>33(80.5%)</b>

On the theme facilities, 13 variables in total for both the tourists (Table 5.5) and travel advisers (Table 5.6) are examined and discussed. The attitude of travel advisers on the theme facilities has been overwhelmingly positive with the only exception of variable F8 (convention) that reflected uncertainty. On contrary, the tourists though on many occasions indicated high satisfaction level but the response were spread across the scale of being unfavourable to favourable and to some extent ambivalent. It appears that the travel advisers think highly of the facilities. This is possibly the out of the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Boards awareness campaigns as well as the travel advisers' personal experience. The convinced travel advisers' beyond doubt will be able to promote Malaysia as a destination in a credible and realistic manner.

Both the accommodation variety (F1) and quality (F2) shows that the tourists and the travel advisers are highly satisfied with these facilities. One of the reasons could be that the accommodations experienced are highly rated (4-5 star hotel/resorts). These highly rated accommodation not only are very reasonably priced due to the oversupply of these facilities, but due to the strength of Pounds Sterling against Ringgit (Malaysian currency), the high-end accommodation becomes affordable to the travelers. The only assumption that can be made of the unsatisfied clients will be that they could have stayed in the lower-end accommodation (1-2 star or backpackers) where quality and standards may not be up to par. However this can be taken as a good learning for some form of central body with caliber and public trust to monitor, give rating and licensing in order to sustain high standards and quality. The airport quality is also seen as very

satisfying with exception of one or two clients. The gulf between the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and other international and domestic airports within Malaysia can be the reason why some clients have indicated as unfavourable.

The response on tourist information (F4) has raised some concerns as a larger percentage of clients indicating unfavourable or ambivalent though still the majority were satisfied. Distribution channel and partnership amongst tourism suppliers can be the cause for this issue. Shopping and food services facilities both scored high satisfaction level and this success should be continued. Accessibility to natural areas saw majority of the clients satisfied. The unsatisfied and undecided ones probably were not given sufficient information on this issue; hence the information distribution issue has to be addressed.

**Table 5.6 Travel Advisers' statistic for the theme facilities**

Variables	Mean	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know / not sure
F1	4.4545	0	0	0	6(54.5%)	5(45.5%)	0
F2	4.5455	0	0	0	5(45.5%)	6(54.5%)	0
F3	4.5455	0	0	1(9.1%)	3(27.3%)	7(63.6%)	0
F4	4.0909	0	0	0	10(90.9%)	1(9.1%)	0
F5	3.9091	0	0	2(18.2%)	8(72.7%)	1(9.1%)	0
F6	4.3636	0	0	0	7(63.6%)	4(36.4%)	0
F7	4.0909	0	0	0	10(90.9%)	1(9.1%)	0
F8	5.6364	0	0	0	1(9.1%)	2(18.2%)	8(72.7%)
F9	4.1818	0	0	0	0	10(90.9%)	1(9.1%)
F10	4.2727	0	0	0	9(81.8%)	1(9.1%)	1(9.1%)
F11	4.0000	0	0	2(18.2%)	7(63.6%)	2(18.2%)	0
F12	4.0909	0	0	1(9.1%)	8(72.7%)	2(18.2%)	0
F13	4.3636	0	0	2(18.2%)	6(54.5%)	3(27.3%)	0

The most ambivalent image to both the tourist and travel advisers is the convention facilities. MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions) is one of the products that Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board has long been working on and probably not have seen much success. The argument can be that most of the tourist are not the business type, but could be independent traveller, visiting friends and relatives or had come for a family holiday hence are not aware of the convention facilities. The counter argument is that though the nature of the client's trip may vary, the awareness of Malaysia having good convention facilities has not been subtly put across to the tourists during their stay in Malaysia. Though the nature of their trip may differ, but these people could be the managing director, decision makers of their organisation and probably looking for a venue for their next conference. The awareness of the tourists doesn't come as a surprise because the travel advisers themselves feel very ambivalent about the convention facility image. If the person who is selling the destination does not know about what is being sold, than this becomes an area where the Tourism Board has to step up a gear in creating awareness. A successful MICE campaign can be one of the solutions for all the oversupply of tourism properties in Malaysia.

Recreation and sports variable have a strong image. Again this can be due to the majority of the travellers staying in the higher end resorts. Health/medical variable though is seen as a positive image from a travel agents perspective, appears to be ambivalent amongst the tourists. Most tourists purchase their travel insurance where health benefits are covered. This could be one of the reasons why much effort has not been taken by tourists to learn more about the medical facilities. Both the tourists and

travel advisers see money changing facilities positive. The children/ baby facilities that appear positive from the travel advisers perspective, again appears ambivalent amongst the tourists. This could simply be due to the tourist type who has responded. The assumption could be that most of the respondent either did not have a family or had not travelled with their children along, hence did not notice of the facilities available.

#### **5.2.4 Communication/Transportation**

The theme communication/transportation examines 15 variables each for tourists (Table 5.7) and travel advisers (Table 5.8). Like the previous sections, discussion and findings of the present section revolves around favourable, unfavourable and ambivalent images. Once again it is evident that most of the variables are perceived to be favourable by the travel advisers with the exception of C5, C6, C8, C13 and C14, which are ambivalent, and some reservations expressed for variables C4 and C9.

**Table 5.7 Tourists' statistic for the theme communication/transportation**

Variables	Mean	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
C1	4.1707	1(2.4%)	4(9.8%)	2(4.9%)	22(53.7%)	4(9.8%)	8(19.5%)
C2	3.7317	0	4(9.8%)	6(14.6%)	28(68.3%)	3(7.3%)	0
C3	3.9024	0	2(4.9%)	1(2.4%)	37(90.2%)	1(2.4%)	0
C4	4.2439	0	0	2(4.9%)	32(78.0%)	2(4.9%)	5(12.2%)
C5	4.3171	0	3(7.3%)	7(17.1%)	15(36.6%)	6(14.6%)	10(24.4%)
C6	4.5366	0	3(7.3%)	4(9.8%)	16(39.0%)	4(9.8%)	14(34.1%)
C7	4.1951	0	3(7.3%)	1(2.4%)	24(58.5%)	11(26.8%)	2(4.9%)
C8	3.7317	1(2.4%)	6(14.6%)	5(12.2%)	22(53.7%)	5(12.2%)	2(4.9%)
C9	3.8537	0	6(14.6%)	4(9.8%)	22(53.7%)	8(19.5%)	1(2.4%)
C10	4.2195	0	0	7(17.1%)	18(43.9%)	16(39.0%)	0
C11	3.2683	2(4.9%)	14(34.1%)	6(14.6%)	13(31.7%)	2(4.9%)	4(9.8%)
C12	3.4878	1(2.4%)	9(22%)	9(22%)	17(41.5%)	1(2.4%)	4(9.8%)
C13	4.8780	0	0	6(14.6%)	13(31.7%)	2(4.9%)	20(48.8%)
C14	4.3171	0	4(9.8%)	4(9.8%)	19(46.3%)	3(7.3%)	11(26.8%)
<b>C15</b>	4.6829	0	3(7.3%)	8(19.5%)	9(22%)	0	21(51.2%)

As for the tourists, besides the variables with regards to flights (C2, C3, & C4), other variables appear to be rather ambivalent or unfavourable. Even then some respondents expressed dissatisfaction when it came to flight availability and flying times. This is an area where Malaysia Airlines can capitalise in positioning themselves, as they are the sole service provider for direct flights between the UK and Malaysia. Another reason for this satisfaction could be that of where these tourists had purchased their travel. There are travel advisers expressing their concerns on the flight routes, and if the tourist had purchased their flight package from these advisers, we can see a correlation why the tourist could have been dissatisfied. Thus, it is important that the tourism board steps in to create awareness to such travel advisers.

However the more concerning variables from a tourist view point are local transportation (C8), Immigration/custom (C9), promotion as a destination (C11) and specific tourism activities (C12). The issue of local transportation and unfriendly immigration/custom are good examples of the ignorance of the supply chain components of the tourism industry of Malaysia. Tourism being one of the top economic drivers for the Malaysian economy fails at this point. Only service providers in the hotel, in the resort, in the aircraft and those designated tourism platforms are the ones who are friendly. Otherwise, those intermediate people like the immigration officers and the local transportation providers take things for granted. Either they are not aware, ignorant or just have a laid back attitude. This is where, policies to integrate and recognise these components as essential in tourism service delivery has to be emphasised and highlighted. To the extent that it is even worthwhile considering having tourism included in school curriculum. The awareness has to be created from the tender schooling age as it becomes more difficult to ask someone with high authority like the customs officer even to smile when granting a tourist visa. However, when asked of the receptiveness of the locals towards the tourist, the response was highly favourable. Moreover, the communication between tourists and locals (C7) also showed favourable response. Hence, not all is lost when it comes to being warm and welcoming. It is just that the gaps have to be addressed and seriousness should be given in overcoming this issue before Malaysia starts losing its tourist to its close competitors.

What's alarming than the above two variables are the promotional variables (C11 & C12) which falls unfavourable amongst tourists. In promoting both Malaysia as a whole and as specific destination (island, sports, beaches) it shows that there are some flaws in the promotional activities. Since, it does not appear as unfavourable amongst the travel advisers, one can assume that the promotional message from source (promotional board) to supplier (travel advisers) is excellent. It is just that this message is not reaching enough audience (consumers – tourists). There can be many reasons to why tourist awareness of Malaysia as a destination is not high. Firstly, it appears that the tourism board may be dependent upon limited distribution channels (i.e. tour operator and travel advisers). More channels have to be discovered and utilised either in a creative manner or by splashing out more funds. Electronic media from radio, television and information technology can be used. To all this, the bottom line is funds. How much is the Malaysian government willing to allocate for tourism. For instance, advertising in television during prime time requires additional funds. Motivation in terms of high commissions for the travel advisers to promote and sell Malaysia requires more funding. This is why, Dubai even without much diversity or attraction as abundant as Malaysia is actually positioning herself well. Hence, at a budget allocation level, Malaysia will have to look into the economic returns from tourism and accordingly allocate additional funds if Malaysia were to position herself as a strong and competitive destination.



**Table 5.8 Travel Advisers' statistic for the communication/ transportation**

Variables	Mean	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
C1	4.5455	0	0	0	6(54.5%)	4(36.4%)	1(9.1%)
C2	4.6364	0	0	0	4(36.4%)	7(63.6%)	0
C3	4.0909	0	0	0	10(90.9%)	1(9.1%)	0
C4	4.0909	0	2(18.2%)	0	4(36.4%)	5(45.5%)	0
C5	4.0909	0	0	5(45.5%)	3(27.3%)	0	3(27.3%)
C6	3.6364	0	0	4(36.4%)	7(63.6%)	0	0
C7	4.0000	0	1(9.1%)	1(9.1%)	6(54.5%)	3(27.3%)	0
C8	4.0000	0	0	3(27.3%)	5(45.5%)	3(27.3%)	0
C9	3.7273	0	2(18.2%)	1(9.1%)	7(63.6%)	0	1(9.1%)
C10	4.2727	0	0	1(9.1%)	6(54.5%)	4(36.4%)	0
C11	4.2727	0	0	1(9.1%)	6(54.5%)	4(36.4%)	0
C12	3.9091	0	0	1(9.1%)	10(90.9%)	0	0
C13	4.6364	0	0	2(18.2%)	4(36.4%)	1(9.1%)	4(36.4%)
C14	4.6364	0	0	1(9.1%)	5(45.5%)	2(18.2%)	3(27.3%)
C15	4.7273	0	0	0	5(45.5%)	4(36.4%)	2(18.2%)

The tools that can be used and which can be cost effective in promoting Malaysia would be the information technology (IT) platform (C5 & C6), which appears as ambivalent amongst both the tourists and travel advisers. The ambivalence could be due to a couple of reasons. Purchasing a holiday through a computer is intangible. One does not meet another person, and may not trust what a machine says. Hence the confidence level of purchasing a tourism product via the Internet may be low. But this should not be the reason for not investing on the IT platform as more and more users are becoming comfortable with the use of computers. Since the middleman component can be reduced through e-commerce, attractive pricing strategies can be used in promoting and selling Malaysia as a destination.

Other ambivalent images of this section include telecommunication (C1), community involvement (C13), socio-economic link with the UK (C14) and industry partnership/networking (C15). The tourists may have found this particular variable not relevant as they could have bought the holiday package as a whole and would not have to interact with each and every component of the supply chain personally. However, the travel advisers found this variable favourable and this indicates that the communication process among the industry players look hopeful. As for the socio-economic and community involvement, a respondent would not be able to give their views had they not come into contact with such experience.

However, what concerns the most amongst the ambivalent subject is the variable telecommunications where the tourists expressed some doubts. But this does not seem to be an issue amongst the travel advisers as it appeared favourable. Thus, one of the possibilities to this situation is that the access to the telecommunication facilities is not straightforward. Probably, not many phones accept credit cards, or even if it does accept it is out of order. There can be a possibility that international calling cards are also not easily available. Therefore, both the maintenance and marketing aspect may have to be looked into if better access to the telecommunication facilities is to be achieved.

### 5.2.5 Services

The services theme examines 11 (Table 5.9) and 9 (Table 5.10) variables for both the tourists and travel advisers respectively. Two different scales were used to suit the nature of questioning; 1) Strongly disagree to Strongly agree and 2) Terrible to Excellent (highlighted with \* as and when required). As mentioned above, these scales are only used to suit the nature of questioning and would not affect the statistics, as both scales are in an ascending order from least favourable to most favourable.

**Table 5.9 Tourists' statistic for the theme services**

Variables	Mean	Strongly Disagree / Terrible*	Disagree / Poor*	Undecided / Satisfactory*	Agree / Good*	Strongly Agree / Excellent*	Don't Know
S1	4.7561	1(2.4%)	2(4.9%)	8(19.5%)	7(17.1%)	0	23(56.1%)
S2*	4.2683	0	1(2.4%)	6(14.6%)	24(58.5%)	1(2.4%)	9(22%)
S3*	3.9756	0	3(7.3%)	7(17.1%)	24(58.5%)	2(4.9%)	5(12.2%)
S4*	4.6098	0	3(7.3%)	3(7.3%)	18(43.9%)	0	17(41.5%)
S5	4.6829	0	4(9.8%)	4(9.8%)	13(31.7%)	0	20(48.8%)
S6	3.9268	0	4(9.8%)	5(12.2%)	26(63.4%)	2(4.9%)	4(9.8%)
S7*	3.8537	0	2(4.9%)	14(34.1%)	18(43.9%)	2(4.9%)	5(12.2%)
S8*	4.6098	0	2(4.9%)	8(19.5%)	12(29.3%)	1(2.4%)	18(43.9%)
S9*	4.1707	0	2(4.9%)	14(34.1%)	12(29.3%)	1(2.4%)	12(29.3%)
S10	4.3171	0	1(2.4%)	8(19.5%)	19(46.3%)	3(7.3%)	10(24.4%)
<b>S11*</b>	4.2439	0	0	6(14.6%)	22(53.7%)	10(24.4%)	3(7.3%)

Views of travel advisers on all the service variables are favourably inclined with one or two exception that was undecided. However, this is not the case amongst tourists. There was not a variable that showed clearly to appear in the favourable end of the scale. What surprises though is that when asked of the overall tourism quality there seems to

be a fair amount of satisfaction amongst tourist and exceptionally high satisfaction amongst the travel advisers. Nonetheless, a few variables that showed a combined value of more than 50% of the higher end of the scale was treated as favourable, simply to reason out the positive overall service satisfaction when most variables appeared ambivalent. These variables include S2 (front line staff), S3 (customs/ immigration), S6 (service quality), and S10 (portrayed image meeting actual image) from the tourists' perspectives. Surprisingly, custom/immigration that showed unfavourable friendliness (C9) characteristics, scored high when it came to efficiency (S3). It shows that the officers are performing their tasks well. It is just, at the first point of entry (first impression) to the country, especially after a long haul flight, a tourist will feel welcomed if a bit more warmth is shown. The tourists also seem to have a higher level of satisfaction when asked about the services provided by the front line staffs (S2) and the service quality experienced (S6). One of the main reasons why the overall tourism quality would have been felt fairly satisfying would be due to the fact that there was no major disappointment of their expectation of Malaysia. This is reflected by variable S10 that scored fairly high on a favourable note where the tourists felt the portrayed image echoes the actual image. When experience meets perception, ones satisfaction level definitely would go up. Hence, in a nut shell getting pass the immigration without hassle, getting good service by the front line staff, good service practice coupled with the fact experience meet perception save the service image of Malaysia.

However, in the era of product saturation, where one destination can offer the exact physical setting as another, the only way to gain strategic advantage is by creating the right aura, experience and feel welcomed: in short the psychological component. This is where the service component steps in and can provide a strategic advantage to a destination's image if capitalised well. Thus, the ambivalent and unfavourable image if not scraped should be curbed to the minimum.

**Table 5.10 Travel Advisers' statistic for the theme services**

Variables	Mean	Strongly Disagree / Terrible*	Disagree / Poor*	Undecided / Satisfactory*	Agree / Good*	Strongly Agree / Excellent*	Don't Know
S1*	4.2727	0	0	1(9.1%)	6(54.5%)	4(36.4%)	0
S2*	4.0000	0	0	2(18.2%)	8(72.7%)	0	1(9.1%)
S3*	4.4545	0	0	1(9.1%)	5(45.5%)	4(36.4%)	1(9.1%)
S4	4.2727	0	0	1(9.1%)	7(63.6%)	2(18.2%)	1(9.1%)
S5	4.2727	0	0	0	8(72.7%)	3(27.3%)	0
S6*	4.2727	0	0	0	8(72.7%)	3(27.3%)	0
S7*	4.0000	0	0	1(9.1%)	9(81.8%)	1(9.1%)	0
S8	4.2727	0	0	0	8(72.7%)	3(27.3%)	0
S9*	4.3636	0	0	0	7(63.6%)	4(36.4%)	0

One of the ways to improve this position is through feedback (S1) that can be gained by the tourism firms that are offering Malaysia as their tourism products. Unfortunately, the majority of tourist either felt ambivalent or showed disagreement when asked about whether they had a chance to provide feedback to the service providers. This itself can be the root to address the service issue that are not satisfactory. This is an area where the NTO should team up with service providers, both outbound and inbound, to create a mechanism that constantly monitor the dissatisfactions of tourists. To begin with, the

main tourism attractions and facilities could provide a box for tourism complaints; have a complaints department in the tourism board that analyses where the services are not meeting the needs of tourists. By doing this one will not only be able to identify the immediate problem but also will be able to identify the other industry components involved which may not have been felt trivial in the eyes of the tourism board.

Hence, the images that appear to be ambivalent and unfavourable amongst tourists, like manager's capabilities (S4), performance standards (S5), first instance assistance (S7), development in response to demand (S8) and destination packaging (S9) can be uprooted and resolved if the right feedback mechanism is in place.

#### **5.2.6 Value for Money**

A bargain deal is what everyone wants for everything and is no exception in the tourism scenario. In this section 8 variables each for tourists (Table 5.11) and travel advisers (Table 5.12) are examined to find out whether they feel favourable, unfavourable or undecided on the pricing nature of these attributes. Malaysia had positioned herself with a tourism tagline of value for money in the past but the improved economy of the nation and higher cost of living as compared to neighbouring countries offering similar products, made the positioning strategy to be revisited and renewed.

**Table 5.11 Tourists' statistic for the theme value for money**

Variables	Mean	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
V1	4.3902	0	0	4(9.8%)	25(61%)	4(9.8%)	8(19.5%)
V2	4.1707	0	2(4.9%)	1(2.4%)	29(70.7%)	6(14.6%)	3(7.3%)
V3	3.5122	0	8(19.5%)	11(26.8%)	18(43.9%)	1(2.4%)	3(7.3%)
V4	3.9024	0	1(2.4%)	8(19.5%)	27(65.9%)	4(9.8%)	1(2.4%)
V5	4.0244	0	2(4.9%)	4(9.8%)	27(65.9%)	7(17.1%)	1(2.4%)
V6	2.8780	5(12.2%)	20(48.8%)	4(9.8%)	5(12.2%)	1(2.4%)	6(14.6%)
V7	4.3171	0	0	2(4.9%)	24(58.5%)	9(22%)	4(9.8%)
V8	4.0244	0	0	9(22%)	23(56.1%)	8(19.5%)	1(2.4%)

However the recent economic downturn and the exchange rate devaluation that affected the Malaysian economy in many 'tourism' ways became a blessing in disguise. With the exchange rate of £1 to 6 Ringgit Malaysia translates to value for money for the British travelers. As compared to previous themes, for the first time, in comparing travel advisers and tourists, most variable are seen as favourable by both parties. The tourist and travel adviser both felt that the variables; domestic tourism package (V1), shopping (V2), accommodation (V4), domestic travel (V5) and food and beverage (V8) were great value for money translating the reason why the overall pricing (V8) appeared very attractive to both parties.

**Table 5.12 Travel Advisers' statistic for the theme value for money**

Variables	Mean	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
V1	4.1818	0	0	0	9(81.1%)	2(18.2%)	0
V2	4.0909	0	0	1(9.1%)	8(72.7%)	2(18.2%)	0
V3	3.5455	1(9.1%)	0	2(18.2%)	8(72.7%)	0	0
V4	4.1818	0	0	1(9.1%)	7(63.6%)	3(27.3%)	0
V5	4.0909	0	0	1(9.1%)	8(72.7%)	2(18.2%)	0
V6	4.6364	0	2(18.2%)	0	3(27.3%)	1(9.1%)	5(45.5%)
V7	4.2727	0	0	0	8(72.7%)	3(27.3%)	0
V8	4.3636	0	0	0	7(63.6%)	4(36.4%)	0

Nonetheless, two variables indicating concerns appeared outside the favourable zones of which are international flights (V3) and alcohol purchase (V6). Of the two what is more concerning is the pricing for the international flights, because it is not just the tourists who feel such but also the travel advisers who basically sell this product. Though the concerning percentage is not high but it should not be treated trivially. A big portion of spending on most travels goes on flight. Thus, giving attractive deals to the tourists will be one way to attract tourist to fly into Malaysia. But when a travel adviser (either tour operator or travel agent) feels the pricing is not attractive, both NTO and the national aircraft (Malaysian Airlines) should take action to rectify this position. Good networking and communication should be the basis to get feedback from these industry players who can make or break the success of a destination.

On the other hand, though pricing of alcohol is found unattractive, it may not be all that bad in terms of the overall image of Malaysia. Although tourist wants to have good and



fun time, which includes alcohol availability and pricing, the same tourists are also flying miles away from their home country to experience the culture, society and values of the destination visited. These culture and societal value itself is a strong attraction point and should not be lost and to an extreme affect should not make the locals behaving like tourists. Two main factors make alcohol pricing unattractive. Firstly the majority of the population are Muslims who don't consume alcohol. By and large, one will not be able to find a Muslim vendor selling alcohol. The culture and value that attracts tourist to Malaysia are partly due to this major population's culture and lifestyle. And one would not want to change the whole belief system just to make alcohol cheaper and available easily.

The second reason for high pricing is because of the government's policy in imposing high taxes. Again this is not at all bad because the country do not want to see much social problem being a spin-off from alcohol availability and consumption. Many developed countries are already facing issues where youths are addicted to alcohol and the ripple effect of it being under age pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, drug addiction and many others that is causing their respective governments to spend millions just to rectify such issues. Therefore Malaysia's stance to have stringent policy on matters relating to alcohol should not pose a major threat in the overall image of Malaysia as long as the other attractive attributes are innovatively capitalised.

### 5.2.7 Management policies

The theme management policies examine 5 variables namely on the tourists (Table 5.13). As explained in the methodological part of this thesis, travel advisers were not included for two reasons. Firstly, because the questionnaire was administered in the UK and it was assumed that some of the respondents might not have had an opportunity to visit Malaysia, hence the response would only be purely on their perception but not experience. The second consideration for eliminating this theme from the questionnaire to the travel advisers is due to the length of the questionnaire and the response gathered from tourists on this theme mostly fell into the don't know category.

**Table 5.13 Tourists' statistic for the theme management policies.**

Variables	Mean	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
M1	4.5122	5(12.2%)	8(19.5%)	0	1(2.4%)	2(4.9%)	25(61%)
M2	5.0244	0	0	3(7.3%)	15(36.6%)	1(2.4%)	22(53.7%)
M3	4.9512	1(2.4%)	0	4(9.8%)	13(31.7%)	0	23(56.1%)
M4	4.6829	1(2.4%)	3(7.3%)	5(12.2%)	11(26.8%)	0	21(51.2%)
M5	4.9512	0	2(4.9%)	3(7.3%)	13(31.7%)	0	23(56.1%)

Most tourists though would have felt that the policy questions being irrelevant resulting in high ambivalent response, some did provide their views, which are very valuable. On the question of obtaining visa, some may have felt it not applicable because the passport is only stamped upon arrival at Malaysia. There's no hassle of lining up at the Malaysian High Commission to obtain visa prior to a tourist's departure. However, the response of a minor proportion of tourists stating difficulty in obtaining visa reveals

that Malaysia with a high British expatriate population may be the reason. Probably, as a tourist, visa is not an issue, but to get work permit probably the procedure could have been tedious. Furthermore, with Malaysia promoting herself to be considered, as a second home, if the immigration procedure becomes difficult, promotion as such may not be successful. Besides being undecided, there were a reasonable number of tourists who agreed that the government commitment (M2) and public (M3) and private (M4) sectors commitments towards sustainable tourism were favourable. Malaysia's National's Tourism Organisation's (NTO) (M5) image being ambivalent and unfavourable is slightly concerning as this is the body that carries the image of Malaysia as a destination. Serious measures have to be taken to improve the image of the organisation itself so that just by looking at the organisations image one should not have second thoughts in purchasing a Malaysian holiday.

#### **5.2.8 Business-to business (B2B) relationship**

Business-to-business relationship is the theme of this section and as the theme depicts, it is not relevant to the tourists, hence omitted from the questionnaire for tourists. This theme examines 11 variables and the statistical finding is as shown in table 5.14 below.

**Table 5.14 Tourists' statistic for the theme B2B relationship**

Variables	Mean	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
B1	4.8182	0	0	0	2(18.2%)	9(81.8%)	0
B2	4.5455	0	1(9.1%)	0	2(18.2%)	8(72.7%)	0
B3	4.1818	0	1(9.1%)	0	6(54.5%)	4(36.4%)	0
B4	4.7273	0	0	0	3(27.3%)	8(72.7%)	0
B5	4.0909	0	1(9.1%)	0	7(63.6%)	3(27.3%)	0
B6	4.5455	0	0	1(9.1%)	3(27.3%)	7(63.6%)	0
B7	4.2727	0	0	0	8(72.7%)	3(27.3%)	0
B8	4.0000	0	0	1(9.1%)	9(81.8%)	1(9.1%)	0
B9	4.2727	0	0	0	8(72.7%)	3(27.3%)	0
B10	3.7273	0	0	4(36.4%)	6(54.5%)	1(9.1%)	0
<b>B11</b>	4.1818	0	0	0	9(81.8%)	2(18.2%)	0

The finding above looks very promising especially with 5 of the variables scoring absolute favourable rating. No sign of ambivalence or unfavourable views surfaced for variables B1 (support from Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board), B4 (Malaysian Airlines), B7 (food and beverage), B9 (selling advantage of attractions) and B11 (overall B2B relationship). It appears that the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board and the Malaysian Airlines are doing an excellent job. Furthermore the travel advisers also think highly of the food and beverage sector in Malaysia. What is very delightful is that the advisers feel and belief that the attractions in Malaysia have a strong selling point translating their overall rating of the B2B relationship with the Malaysian counterparts highly satisfactory.

However, as a recap, this list of travel advisers who have responded has been obtained from the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB). The positive outcome of it is that there is a positive relationship between MTPB and these travel advisers. Probably variation of views would have been obtained if travel advisers who are not in the list but selling Malaysia had responded. Therefore, though the majority have responded positively for all 11 attributes, even the slightest indication of ambivalence and dissatisfaction is treated as crucial in this discussion. The variable that had a hint of ambivalence includes B6, B8 and B10. The accommodation (B6) and transportation (B8) sector have been highlighted to be ambivalent hence drawing attention that this issue should not be left unattended by MTPB. The worrying thought though is the variable rewards from selling Malaysia (B10) where travel adviser have hinted politely that the benefits of selling Malaysia as a destination is not attractive. Whether it is in the form of commission or sponsoring representatives to experience Malaysia should be reviewed. This is a serious issue because other NTO's especially those with direct competition with Malaysia may be rewarding these travel advisers better. Naturally, the tendency is to sell the product that reaps more benefit. Therefore, care should be taken by MTPB to keep these travel advisers happy.

Moving on from ambivalent variables, three variables namely B2, B3 and B5 showed trace of unfavourable response. Commitment towards selling Malaysia (B2) as a destination getting an unfavourable response came as a surprise because this is amongst the travel adviser that have been listed by MTPB. The only logical justification could

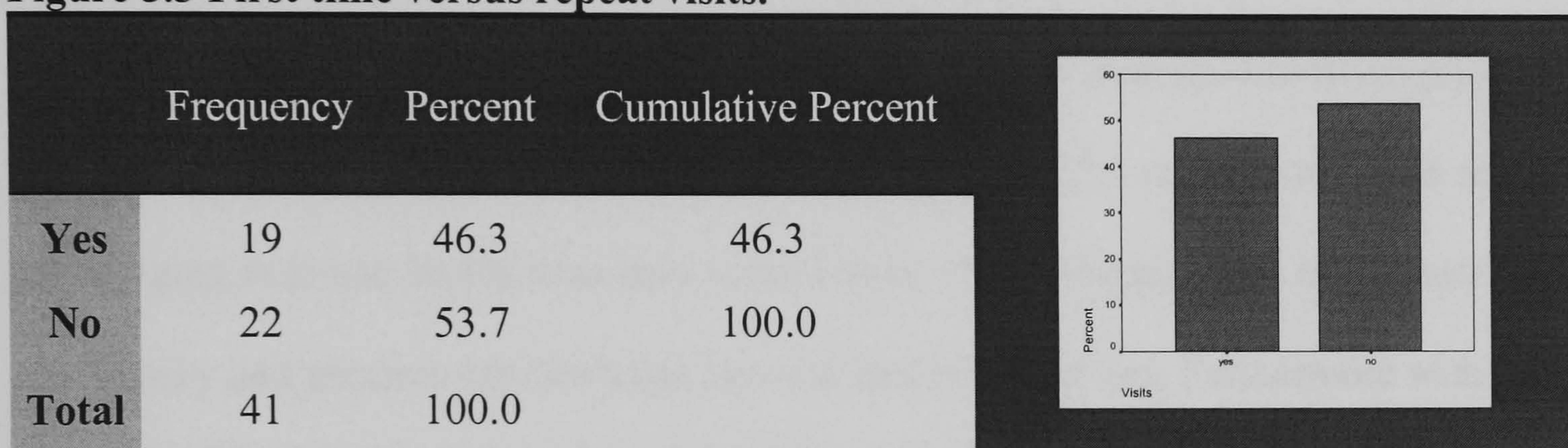
be that this travel adviser is so prominent and powerful that just having Malaysia, as a destination listed in their brochure is already an achievement. However, if that is not the case then MTPB will have to review the list of travel advisers that they have partnership with. Another variable of concern is that of the partnership with the inbound tour operators in Malaysia (B3). This issue is always a challenge since a platform for networking and communication is required if the outbound operator of the source country and the inbound operator of the destination were to strike a positive partnership. Again MTPB can play an active role in linking up these industry players.

Finally the variable that showed trace of unfavourable response is the use of information and communication technology (B5). One could argue that not everyone is familiar with computers, but in a knowledge economy/knowledge society, the use of information technology (IT) will prevail and that is the direction the global trend is heading towards. Thus, if MTPB can assist travel advisers who are not familiar with IT, not only will Malaysia as a destination will be available to a wider target audience, the partnership between MTPB and the respective travel advisers will also benefit and prosper out of such interactions.

### 5.2.9 Experience and perception

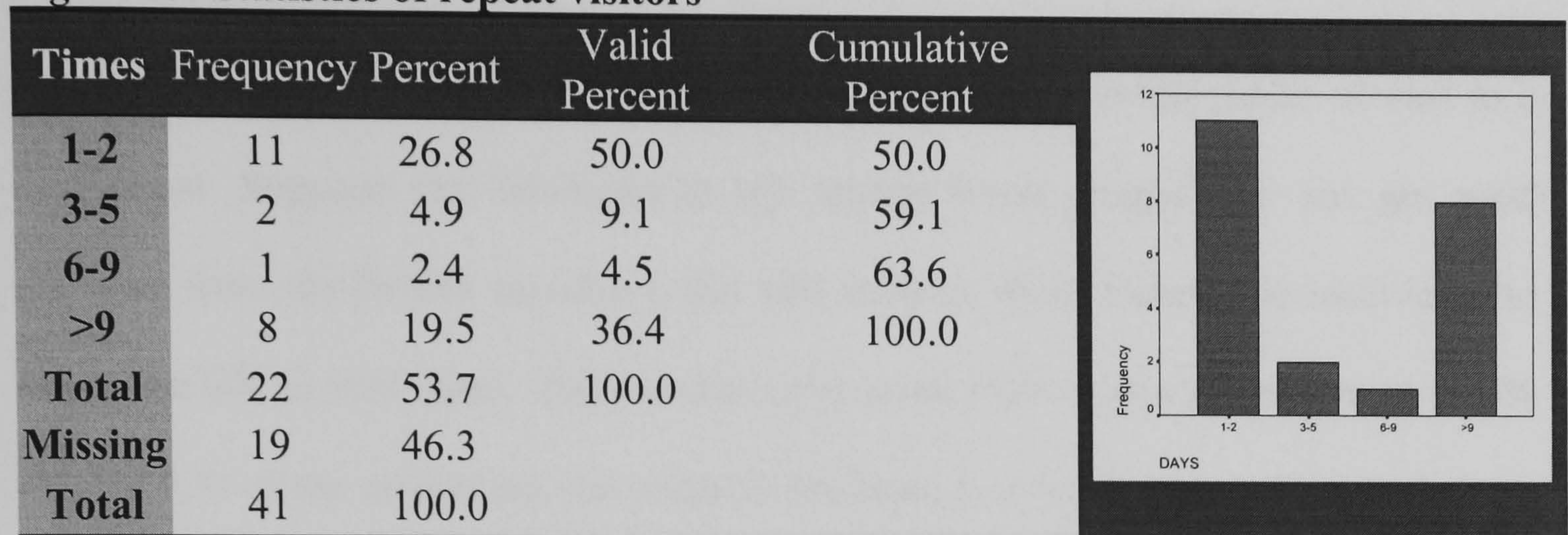
The questionnaires for both travel adviser and tourists covered the themes experience and perception. Due to different type of questioning, the findings and discussion would be presented separately; the initial discussion would be on tourists, and then followed by the travel advisers.

**Figure 5.3 First time versus repeat visits.**



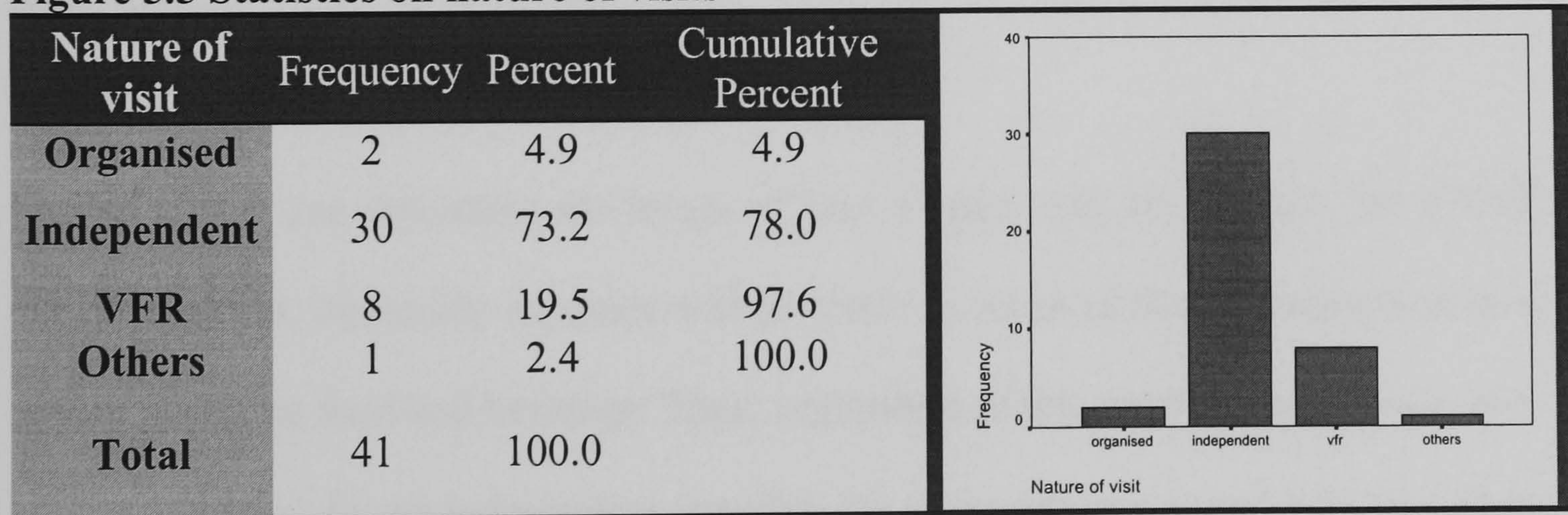
As for the tourists, 46.3% of the respondents are visiting Malaysia for the first time whereas 53.7% are repeat visitors (Figure 5.3). To get that many repeat visitation indicates that once the respondent has experienced, then he/she is convinced that Malaysia is worthwhile a place for repeat visitation. Another reason could also be the historical ties between Malaysia and Britain. Being part of the commonwealth nation, the two countries understands each other better, hence enhancing more interaction through many forms of trade and economic activities where one can presume tourism is part of it.

**Figure 5.4 Statistics of repeat visitors**



The fact that British travellers shuttle frequently between Malaysia and the UK is evident from figure 5.4 where 50% have visited Malaysia at least once or twice prior to this trip; followed by 3-5 times (9.1%) and 6-9 times (4.5%) respectively; and more encouraging is to see 36.4% who have visited more than 9 times. Again this reflects the past history and positive ties that exist between these two nations. Furthermore with the launch of Malaysia as second home programme, it will be interesting to embark on a future study that examines the influence of this programme

**Figure 5.5 Statistics on nature of visits**



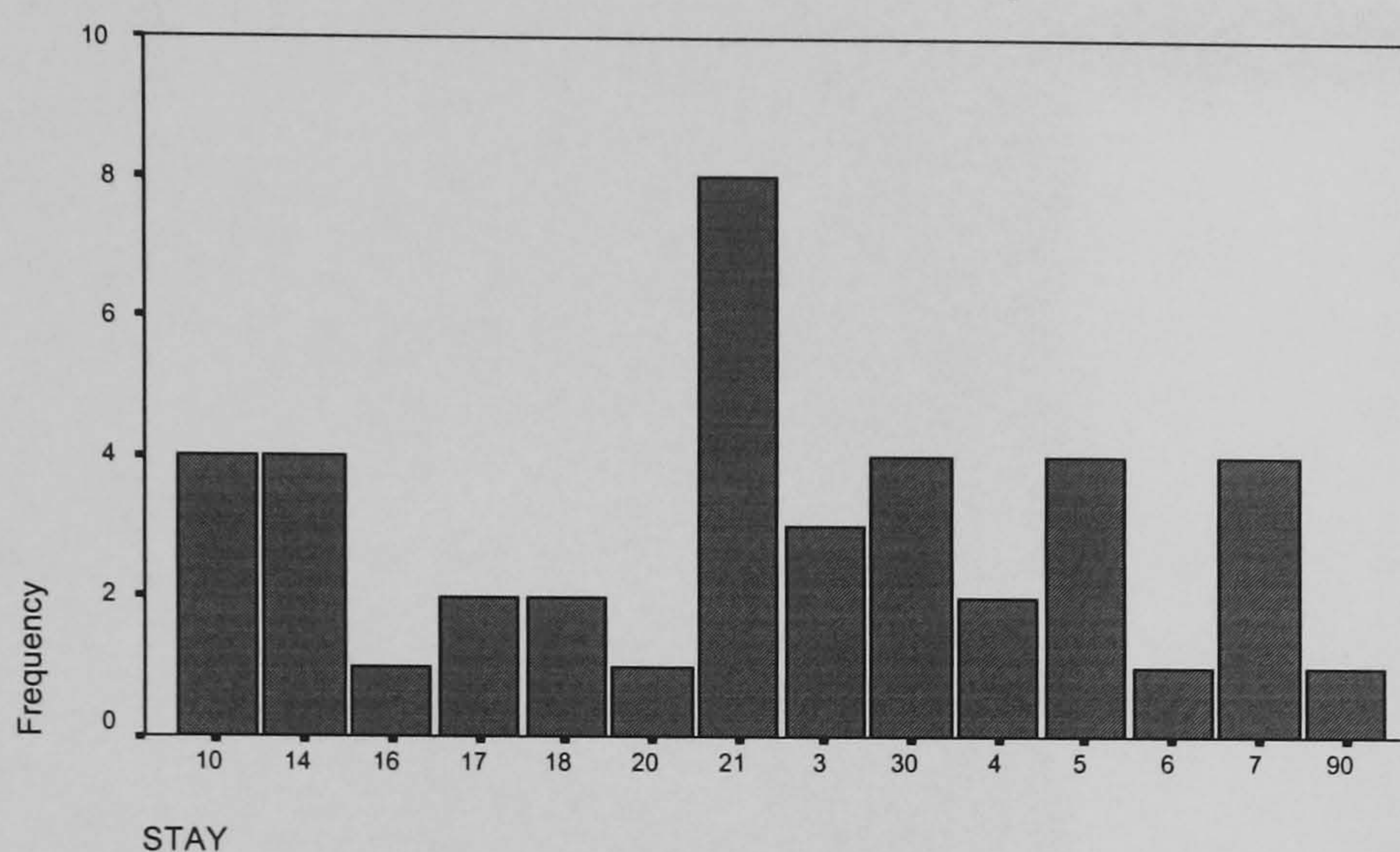


Speaking of influence, one can relate the influencing factor to the nature of visit to a destination. Suppose the 'Malaysia as my second home programme' has got good response from the British travellers, this will enhance their friends and relatives who are in the UK to visit them. There seems to be some truth in this discussion as 19.5% (Figure 5.5) of the respondent has come to Malaysia to visit their friends and relatives. However, it will be early stages to deduct that such programme is a success without examining the VFR segments separately, because there may be a higher percentage of friends visited as compared to relatives. Then there is a question of are all friends or all relatives a British national. However, at this point, taking a positive note the VFR market segment seems to be doing well after independent travellers' (73.2%) market segment. The other segment includes organised trips (4.9%) as per figure 5.5 but appears not to be the favourite form of travel. It is surprising that none of the respondents had indicated either business or education as their nature of visit. This could be due to the low response rate that the target market as mentioned above has not been captured.

Nature of visit can determine the length of stay (Figure 5.6). In example, for a VFR market segment, obviously expenses will be lower in terms of accommodation or to a certain extent on food and beverage. Thus, respondent of this market segment may stay longer. Whereas, for an independent traveller, the expenditure incurred will be higher, thus making the stay short. The statistics on length of stay (Figure 5.6) gives an average

of 15.9 days per person per visit, of which frequency is highest amongst tourist who stay for 3 weeks. The maximum length of stay is 3 months as compared to the minimum length of stay that is 3 days.

**Figure 5.6 Length of stay**



The variation of length of stay, from 3 months to 3 weeks to 3 days actually is a positive indication of Malaysia's ability to attract a variety of market segments to the country. Those staying three months are possibly the ones with either friends or relatives staying in Malaysia. On the other hand, the three weeks category can be independent travellers, who have come for a holiday and are contributing an awesome lot to the Malaysian tourism economy. The 3-day stay should also be looked at positively since this category could either be business travellers or stopover visitors. Let it be, business or stopover visitor, the taster course of Malaysian experience should be capitalised fully to lure this group as potential long stay visitors.

On a different note, the influencing force (Table 5.15) behind the respondents' decision-making process to choose Malaysia as their preferred destination was examined. Amongst the main influencing factors are friends/relatives, travel guide, people who have visited Malaysia in the past and the Internet.

**Table 5.15 Influencing factors in tourists decision-making.**

<b>INFLUENCING ROLE</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Travel brochure	3
Friends/relatives in Malaysia	16
Tour operator	0
People who have visited Malaysia	13
Internet/website	13
Magazine/newspaper	5
Friends/relatives	11
Travel agent	2
Library	0
Travel guide	16
Organised information night on destination	0
Television programme	2
Past experience	9
Tourist information centre	0
Word of mouth	8
Other	6

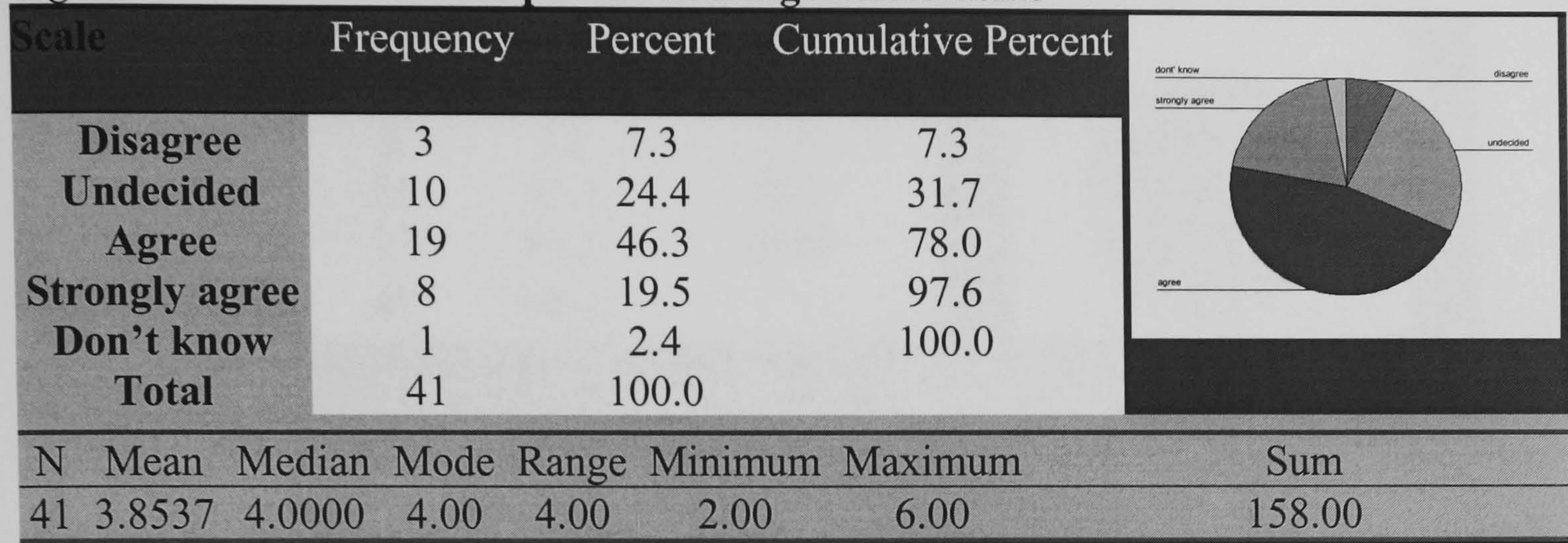
A reasonable number of respondents also indicated that word of mouth communication, magazine/newspapers and their own past experience as reason to why Malaysia was their choice. Now, what is most worrying is that the lack of influential roles by travel brochures, tourist information centre, television programmes, organised information night, library, travel agents and tour operators. Amongst these, library and organised information night are not crucial since these can be strategies and alternatives besides the mainstream promotional channels where information can be disseminated. The real concern is on the roles of tour operators and travel agents. Either tourist has become so

sophisticated, that they would prefer to gain information by themselves (i.e. via internet) or only through sources that they trust the most (i.e. friends and relatives). It appears that, having little confidence or trust can be one reason, or on the other hand the travel agents /tour operators themselves are not motivated to wholeheartedly promote Malaysia. The only clause out that could be seen in this situation is that there are high numbers of respondents indicating travel guide as their source of information, where these travel guides are normally acquired from either a travel agent or tour operator. Even then, it is the printed media and not the personal touch that is influencing. This is definitely an area where MTPB has to work on to identify how best to improve the situation. To add on to this concern, is the 'no response' when it came to the tourist information centre. MTPB has its base in London, which may restrict potential tourist to personally visit the office if they live outside the London vicinity. But this should not be seen as an issue, since so much advancement has been attained in this era of telemarketing and Internet marketing. For instance, telephone calls from the UK to Malaysia only costs a penny a minute nowadays. If MTPB finds the cost is too high to operate such call centres, one of the options should be to run the operations from Malaysia where cost of labour and maintenance is lower. Good examples are BT and Abbey National (British based companies) who have their call centre base in India to reduce cost. Hence, when a client dials a 0845 number to enquire about his/her account from the UK, to some extent, to their surprise, they would communicate with service providers with accent that they would not have expected. But from a tourism point, it may be advantageous to hear a Malaysian communicating to the potential

tourists – it may create the feel of getting first hand-experience from a tourist viewpoint. Anyway, this discussion is to point out that MTPB must find innovative and creative measures to address the issue of playing a more proactive role in influencing potential tourists. This is an issue that revolves around availability of funds and high dependence on the amount allocated by the government, which also explains why the role of television to influence potential tourists also resulted in poor response. To capture a wider television audience requires airing advertisement during prime time, in between the most watched television programmes. The issue is that, even in the specialised travel programmes, one could not see Malaysia appearing as frequently as other destinations. One of the reasons could be that major travel agents/ tour operator owns these travel channels where MTPB has not established partnership yet. If so efforts should be made to rectify this matter.

Moving on, the next set of assessment is on the performance of Malaysia as a destination and her ability to attract and motivate future visits. The first amongst the four questions asked is to examine the gap between the actual and perceived image of Malaysia (Figure 5.7).

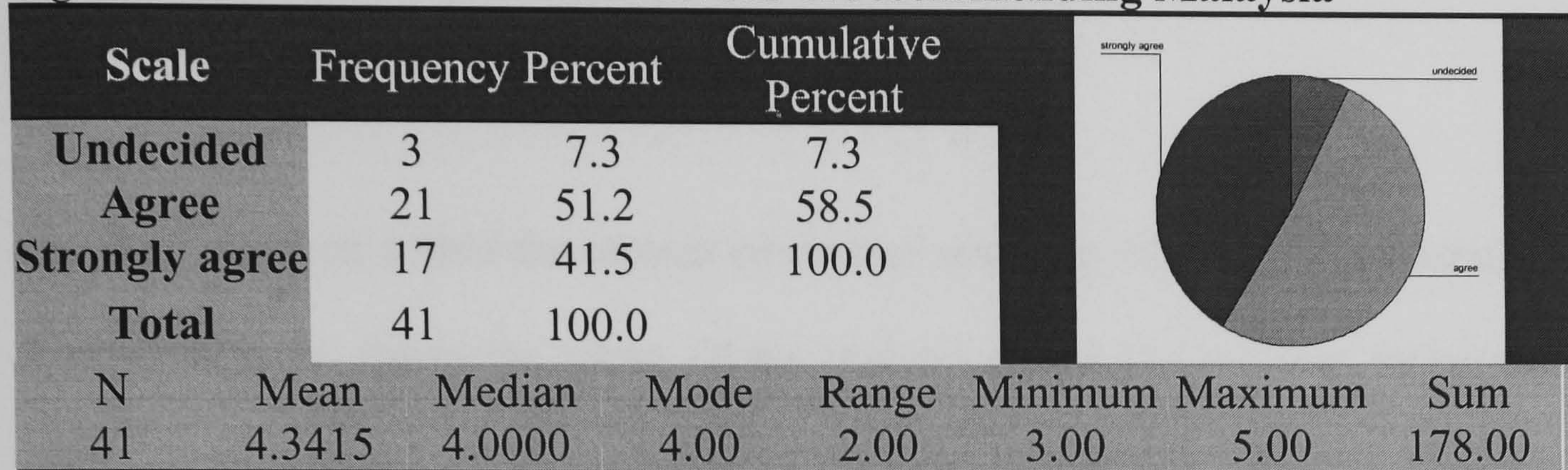
**Figure 5.7 Tourists' actual-perceived image assessment.**



65.8 % (agree and strongly agree) indicated that Malaysia exceeded their expectations, with 26.8% (undecided and don't know) being ambivalent and 7.3% disagreeing. None appeared in the strongly disagree scale. Though the statistics is highly positive, the interpretation of this is rather tricky due to the fact that potential British tourists may have underestimated Malaysia's attractiveness as a destination. It's only after experiencing Malaysia that they feel that Malaysia has exceeded their expectation. The implied message here is that Malaysia is not promoted to her potential.

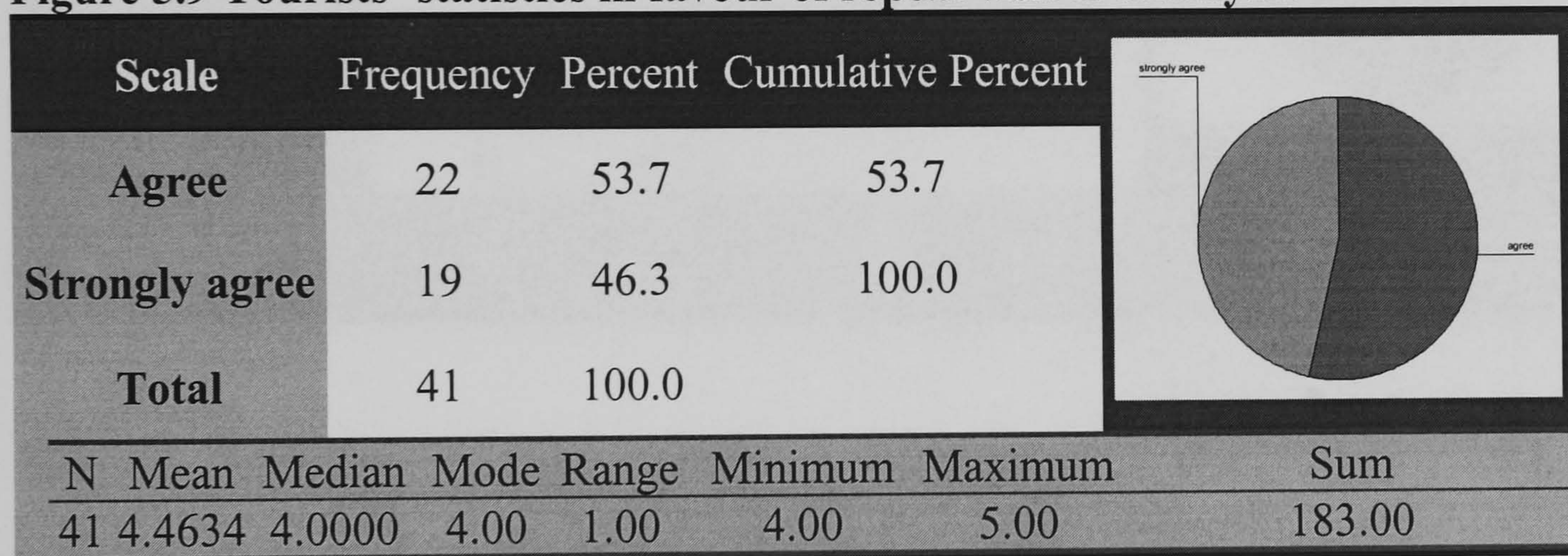
However the positive outcome of this expectation exceeding perception resulted in the respondents strongly favouring in recommending Malaysia to others (Figure 5.8) and expressing that they would visit Malaysia again (Figure 5.9).

**Figure 5.8 Tourists' statistics in favour of recommending Malaysia**



92.7 % of respondents favoured Malaysia as a destination that they would recommend with only 7.3% who were undecided. It shows that, though there was a small percentage of unfavourable response as in Malaysia not exceeding their expectation, none actually felt of disagreement in recommending Malaysia as a destination.

**Figure 5.9 Tourists' statistics in favour of repeat visit to Malaysia**

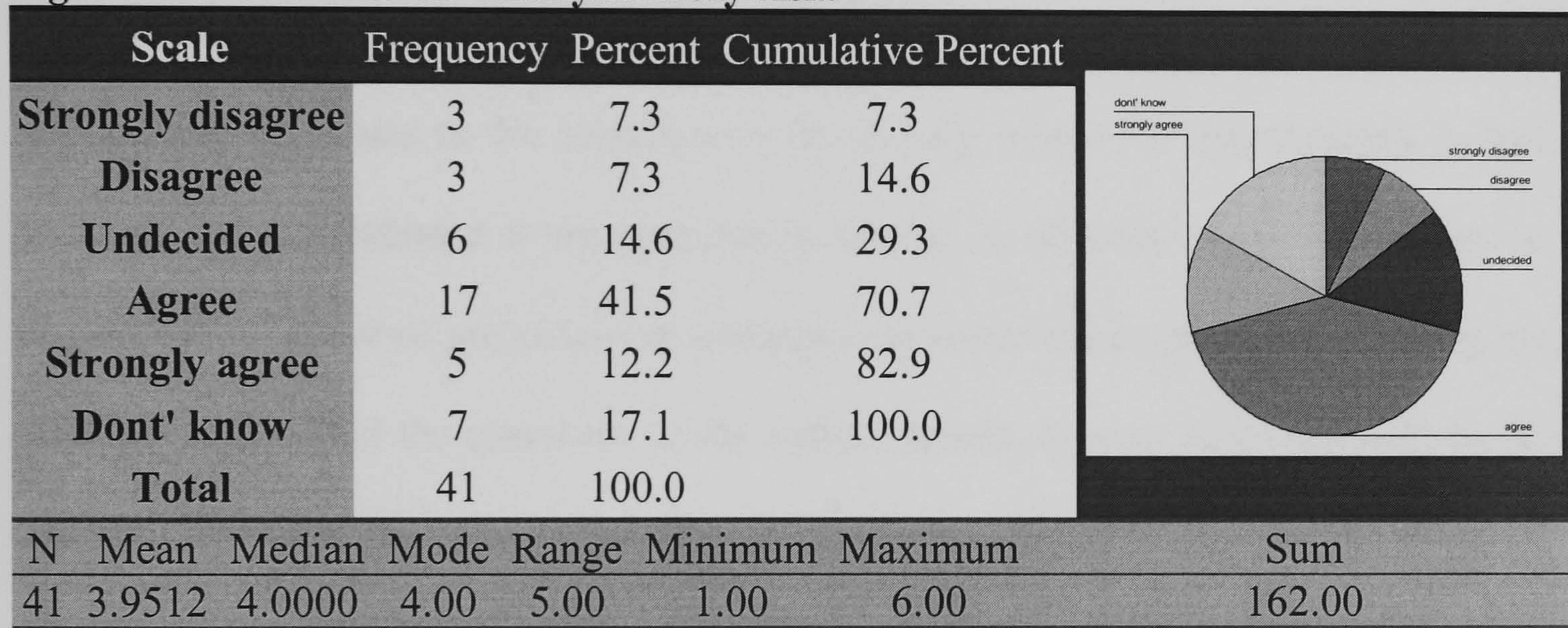


This discussion on Malaysia's performance and ability to attract tourist is further strengthened by the absolute favourable response on the third question where all respondents were in favour of choosing Malaysia as their preferred destination as a repeat visitor. Having seen the findings above, Malaysia should sustain this positive

image and possibly improve on the promotion bit where the true potential of Malaysia as a destination can be achieved.

The final question within the present context of assessing Malaysia's performance as a destination is to obtain the views of the respondents on the tag line 'Malaysia truly Asia', The response on the tourists perception on whether 'Malaysia truly Asia' represents a successful Malaysian image is as shown in Figure 5.27.

**Figure 5.10 Statistics of 'Malaysia truly Asia'**



Although more than 50% are in favour of 'Malaysia truly Asia' representing a true Malaysian image, almost 50% of the respondents are ambivalent and not in favour of which a higher percentage are ambivalent as compared to not in favour. A simple reasoning could be of that Malaysia's evolution as an industrialised and modernised nation has taken the toll of appearing as no different than any other developed nation, hence losing its' uniqueness as a nation rich in pluralism namely Asian pluralism. This means, the British tourists experience from architecture to dressing to locals' behaviour

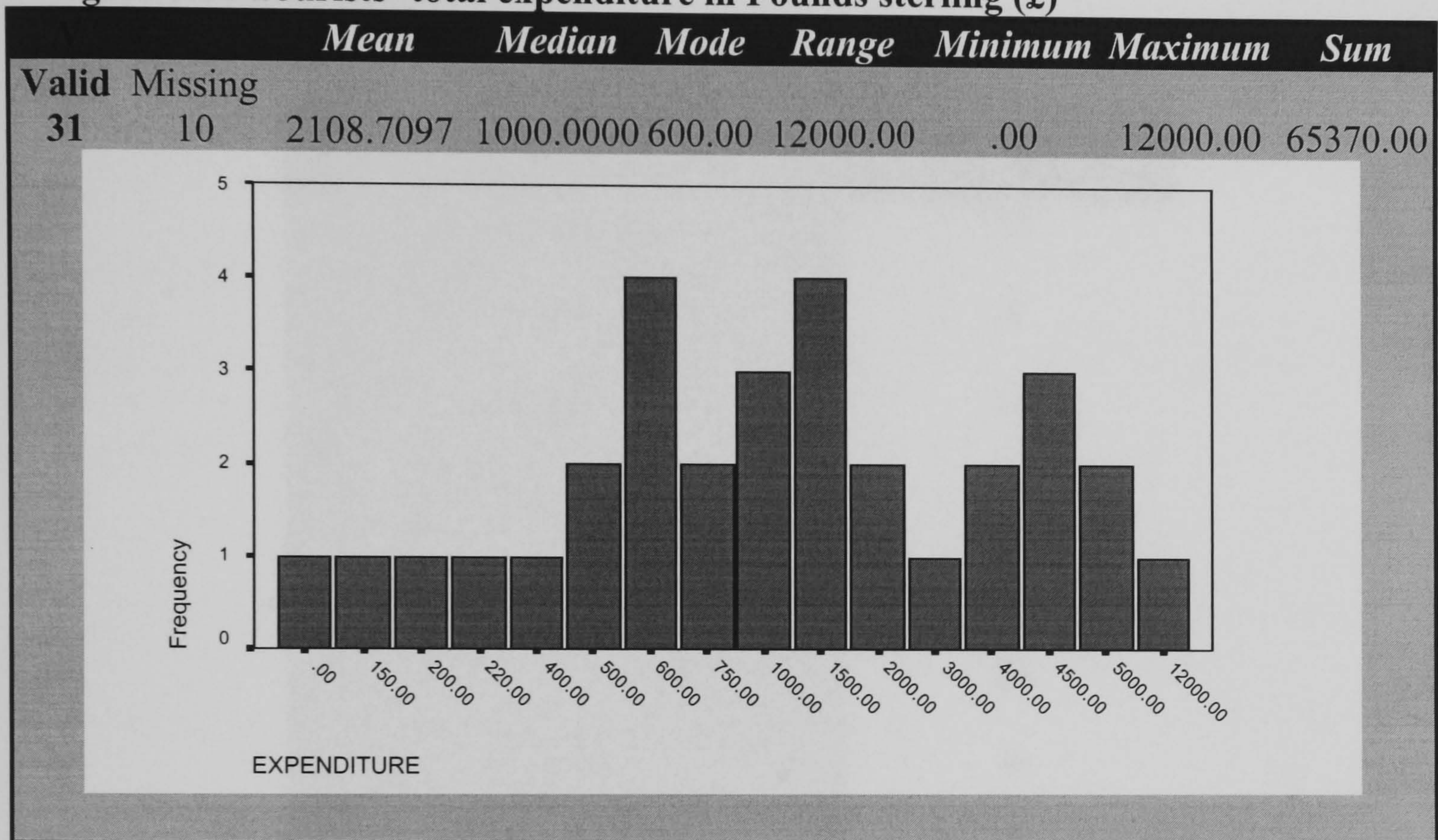


is more or less the same as their home country. If the above is the case, then reversing the situation may not be possible, but channelling the tourists experience outside the ordinary (i.e. modernisation) into unique setting is an option to be considered. Future planning and development of cities and towns should also take into considerations to include the unique local (Asian) characteristic, for instance the architecture of buildings, to reflect the roots and history of culture and pluralism amidst modernisation and industrialisation.

Nevertheless, there could be another unspoken element that could cause this ambivalence. It relates to the pluralism of the society where the apprehension is that pluralism is not celebrated to its maximum potential. A situation where one culture is singled out to be more prominent as compared to other ethnic groups not having an equal slice to reflect the pluralism of the nation. Hence, it is an effort not only to be taken by MTPB or the Ministry of Tourism alone, but should be a collective effort of the government as a whole to determine policies that will achieve and reflect the truth; which is a plural and diverse society. Some learning can be absorbed from Malaysia's neighbouring country, Singapore, which also is a nation with plural ethnicity. For instance, three different languages explain the value of Singaporean denomination, a good starting point, simply because every tourist will have to use and see the local currency while in a destination. Hence, efforts as such have to be done to reflect and celebrate pluralism if the ambivalent image of 'Malaysia Truly Asia' were to be turned into a success story.

The following sets of questions to be discussed are of free elicitation in nature. The first amongst these questions is the expenses (Figure 5.11) incurred by the tourist for their visit to Malaysia.

**Figure 5.11 Tourists' total expenditure in Pounds sterling (£)**



75.6% out of the total 41 responded of which higher frequency occurred within the range of £500 to £ 2000 of spending. The average spending is £2108.71 whilst on the extreme end a respondent spent £12000.00. Drawing from the average 15.9 days length of stay, an approximate deduction of £132.62 per person per day expenditure can be inferred. The minimum spending of £0 that does not make sense could be due to a dependent (a child) answering the questionnaire. A wide range of expenditure pattern also indicates of the different types of tourist visiting Malaysia; from VFR to independent to stopover market segments, where obviously the longer one stays the

more they spend with exception to the VFR market since expenditure incurred may be partially substantiated by the host.

A quick frequency count on the destinations visited during the respondents' stay in Malaysia is shown in table 5.16.

**Table 5.16 Destinations visited by tourists**

<b>Destination</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Kuala Lumpur</b>	37
<b>Borneo</b>	4
<b>Pangkor Laut</b>	14
<b>Penang Island</b>	10
<b>Langkawi Island</b>	9
<b>Tioman Island</b>	26
<b>Taman Negara</b>	6
<b>Perhentian Island</b>	6
<b>Cameron Highlands</b>	7
<b>Fraser's Hill</b>	1
<b>Genting Highlands</b>	3
<b>Redang Island</b>	1

City, island and beach, nature and highlands are the 4 classifications the above destinations can be fitted into. Pangkor Laut, Penang, Langkawi, Tioman, Perhentian and Redang come under the island and beach cluster with the highest level of

attractiveness amongst the respondents as compared to other classifications. Taman Negara and Borneo portrays more of a nature-based image while Cameron, Genting and Fraser's are highlands based resorts. Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia appears to be the only city within the country that seems to be popular amongst the respondents. Promotional activities and accessibility to these destinations seems to be the one of the many reasons why these destinations have gain popularity. However, it is clear that British tourists truly are most attracted to sun sand and sea, as the frequency to these destinations appears to be most popular. An assessment of the dossiers in chapter 7 will highlight and to certain extent provide a correlation of the promotional activity to the resulting consumption pattern as above.

There are some issues that can be discussed from the above findings. One of it would be the inability to promote and attract tourists to other cities in Malaysia besides Kuala Lumpur. Another issue would be the Malaysian image versus the specific destination image. Although from a truly business sense the motive is return on investment, from an image building sense it may not be very healthy to know Borneo or Penang and not to address Malaysia. However, if specific destination image sells better, it should not be radically changed, but the image Malaysia should be incorporated. For this to happen, state and federal tourism bodies should have good communication and understanding, as most if not all states carry out their own promotional activities.

Based upon the tourists' Malaysian experience, they were asked to express on the features that they felt Malaysia should emphasise in order to improve the country's image as a tourists' destination. Safety, friendly, value for money, shopping in Kuala Lumpur, diving, beaches, Cameron Highlands, variety/diversity, islands, wildlife/rainforest, exotic but safe, food, children's' safety, multi-cultural, river (boats), English widely spoken, eco-tourism, racial harmony, availability of alcohol, climate, unspoilt environment, toilet cleanliness, historical aspects (rubber, tin) and handicrafts (batik), are among the many feature the tourists felt should be emphasised to lure more tourists to Malaysia. In short, it reveals that the British tourist needs a lot of information, and proper information should be disseminated in order for them to do adequate planning and preparation prior to their departure to a destination. Bearing in mind the above highlighted features, it is up to the service providers to develop, maintain and manage such features to high service standards.

The tourists were also asked to express of the countries that they felt is similar to Malaysia. Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia were the three countries that were highlighted by the tourists. All three countries mentioned share geographical and gastronomy diversity. Development, modernisations and shopping facilities were found similar to Singapore.

The final bit of the free elicitation question is rather interesting because the tourists are asked to describe Malaysia and its closest competitors just by the first five words that come to their mind. The selection of the four competitors namely Thailand, Singapore

Indonesia and Hong Kong were based from the earlier findings of the exploratory study. The first words expressed that reflect the image of these destinations are as shown in table 5.17.

**Table 5.17 Tourists' images of Malaysia and competitors - free elicitation.**

Destination Image	Malaysia	Thailand	Singapore	Indonesia	Hong Kong
1- Weather/Sun	6	5		1	
2- Value	6	8		2	1
3- Friendly	10	11	2	2	1
4- Exotic	4	3	1	2	
5- Hot /humid	8	5	4	2	2
6- Busy		4	3	1	18
7- Exciting	2	7	1	2	4
8- Food	13	11	4	3	4
9- Islamic	4			5	
10- Faces/people	4	5	2	2	3
11- Scam/drugs/sex		6			
12- Clean/sterile	3		20		
13- Police			1		
14- Unstable/danger		1		17	
15- Jungle/Tropical	18	2		10	
16- SARS			2		6
17- Expensive			3		3
18- Modern/Hi-tech	3		17		12
19- Shopping	2	1	6		9
20- Safe	4		3		
21- Beach	14	12		4	
22- Massage		1			
23- Petronas Tower	1				
24- Transit			2		
25- Bali				5	
26- Unfriendly				1	3
27- Diving	2	1		1	
28- Boring/Dull			5		1
29- Kuala Lumpur	4				

Based upon the frequency of occurrence of images against each destination, some inferences can be drawn as to what are the favourable, ambivalent and unfavourable

images. Comparisons in terms of competitive advantage of the destinations can also be implied. However, since this study focuses on Malaysian image, the discussion will revolve around the strength and weaknesses of Malaysia's destination image in comparison to its competitors.

The exercise above saw 29 images emerging of which 3 were destination specific; Petronas Twin Towers and Kuala Lumpur representing Malaysia whilst Bali representing Indonesia. Although it is early stages and low in terms of response, it is welcoming to see that landmark like the Petronas Twin Tower and capital city Kuala Lumpur are associated with the country's image. Hopefully in the long run these images (Twin tower and Kuala Lumpur) gain more popularity and play a successful role in representing Malaysia just like how Eiffel tower and Paris does the job for France. In the case of Indonesia, Bali does not come as a surprise because the positioning is such that Bali takes the leading role as compared to Indonesia. Its quite surprising that Borneo, Penang, F1 or to certain extent Singapore did not appear as the words that associate to Malaysia. After omitting the above three images, 16 other words were found to have association with the Malaysian image of the remaining 26 words.

Before interpreting the 16 words that are associated with Malaysia, it will be of the interest of this thesis to examine the 10 words that does not represent Malaysia but its competitors. This is to observe whether these words that are not associated to Malaysia

provide a competitive advantage to the competitors. The word busy/bustling/crowded/polluted represented all the 4 competitors with Hong Kong associated to this impression the most. Busy and bustling can be viewed both as a favourable and unfavourable image. When busy represents liveliness or 'happening' it appears to be favourable hence there are potentials that Malaysia would want to work on to create such image, however if busy related to crowdedness, congestion, pollution and dirty then Malaysia is not at a losing end. Scam/sex/drugs are the words in association that represent Thailand's underground tourism activities but not the other destinations. Although such 'dark' activities may attract some market segment, it is not an image worthwhile investing as this may not only creates adverse image to family holidaymakers but also will create social problem amongst locals. The word police reflected Singapore and not the other destinations. On the other hand Singapore provides a safe image which Malaysia too have but not to the extent of having the police and army making rounds in their full uniform and with M-16's that may create discomfort to a tourist in a holiday destination SARS and expensive are words associated to both Singapore and Hong Kong but not the other destinations. Malaysia is lucky not to be associated to both SARS and expensive though SARS did have an adverse effect on tourism receipt to Malaysia. Massage uniquely appeared for Thailand and not the other destination. Again, knowing that massages/SPAS are available in Malaysia, positioning at the right way as a high-end luxury holiday and not as a cheap image, which can be associated to prostitution and sex, is and will be a good move. The word transit/stopover represented Singapore alone whilst the word unfriendly



represented Indonesia and Hong Kong. Not having a unfriendly image is an absolutely favourable image for Malaysia. However, not having a stopover or transit image can be something that Malaysia can tap into. Singapore appears to be the preferred stopover especially to people travelling to Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia. Malaysia's aim may be to increase the number of long-stay tourists but by stopping over one can flavour the essence of a destination and can be a potential long-stay tourist in future. An area where MTPB, Malaysian Airlines and Kuala Lumpur International Airport can work together to improve Malaysia's image as a hub for international flights.

Finally the word boring/dull represented both Singapore and Hong Kong and not other destinations. It is also pleasing to see that Malaysia is not seen as boring or dull. Busy does not mean liveliness and this is reflected in the case of Hong Kong. At the same time clean/sterile, no chewing gums, efficient and overly strict image too not necessarily can escape from both the SARS and dull/boring image as experienced by Singapore. Hence, beside the minor areas where Malaysia can work on, the other word association that did not appear to describe Malaysia are not at all a lost, in fact are good indeed for a favourable image.

Four out of the 10 words associated to Malaysian image distinctly stand out for Malaysia, namely friendly, food, jungle/tropical and beach. These are favourable images and the direct competition on these images is only evident coming from both Thailand and Indonesia though the words frequency representing Indonesia is low.

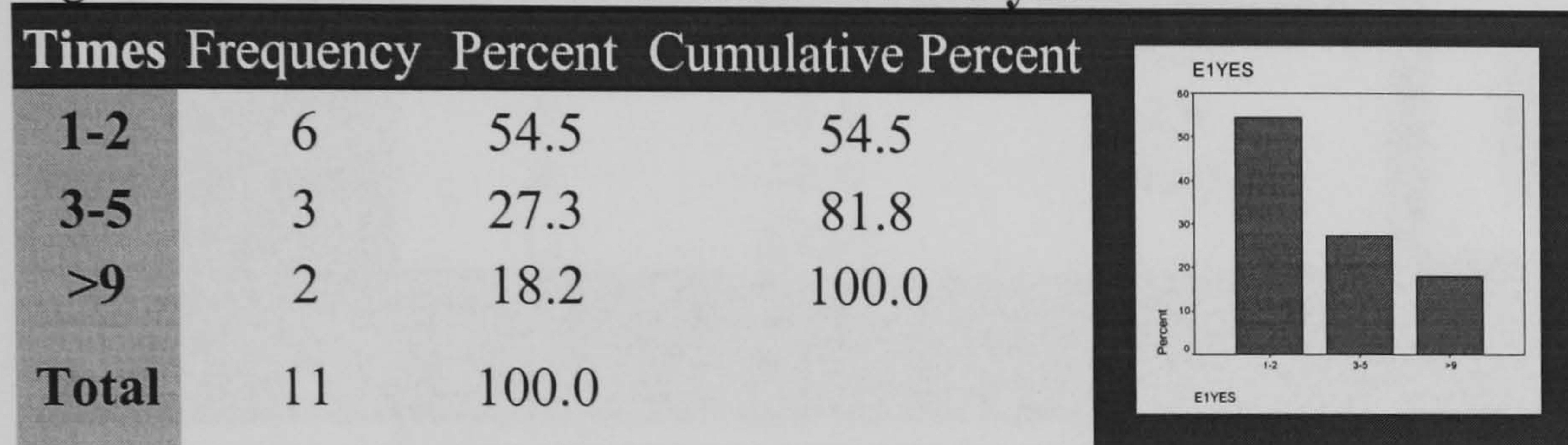
Malaysia and Thailand simply holds an upper hand as compared to Indonesia due the danger, political instability, and religious unrest that the country portrays. Religious unrest and national instability though are seen as going hand –in-hand in the case of Indonesia, it appears not true in the case of Malaysia where tourist have indicated that Malaysia is both Islamic and safe. However, after 9/11 and war against terrorism has taken rise, it will not be strategically advantageous to portray a highly Islamic image as this may create an ambivalent image for potential tourists. Malaysia on the other hand can thump on their strength of having a plural society. As for Singapore, the image portrayed has more direct competition with Hong Kong and not Malaysia and Thailand.

The area though Malaysia should concentrate on winning over from Singapore is the favourable airport hub status and as a shopping paradise. However from the word association, it is apparent that Thailand is the destination that will create stiffest competition to Malaysia, as they are equally good if not better in every department that Malaysia has to offer. Speak of value, friendliness, weather, excitement, food, beaches and eco/nature; whether culturally, geographically or psychologically Thailand should be seen as the biggest threat and Malaysia should find creative, innovative, psychological ways to create the right aura and ambience to go into direct competition with Thailand.

Moving on, the experiences and perceptions of travel advisers are examined. Due to the reason of the questionnaire being distributed in the UK, the first question asked was if

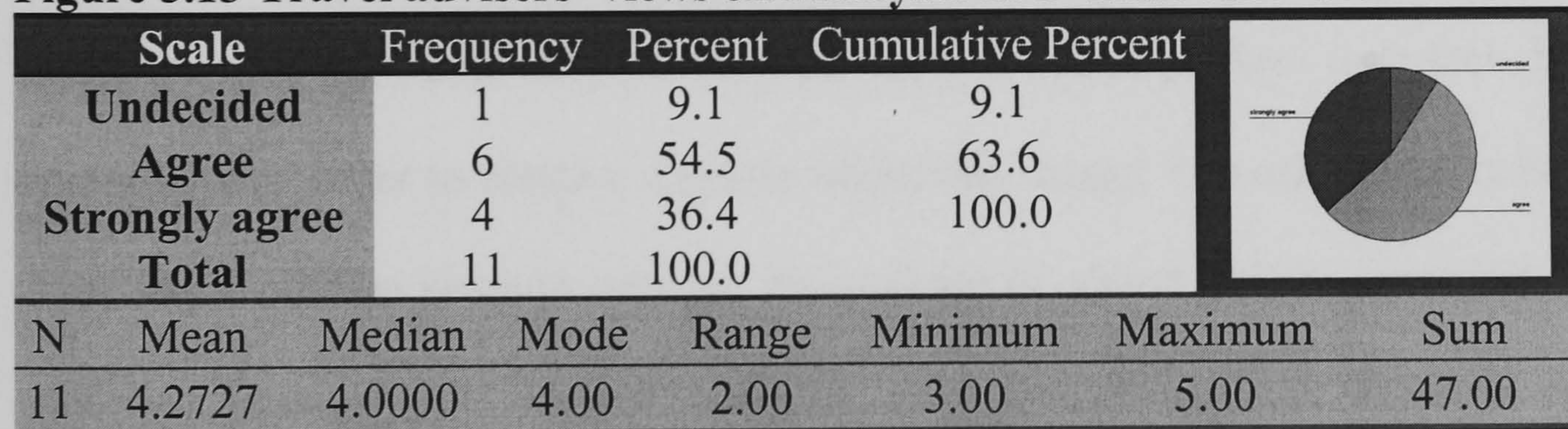
the respondents have visited Malaysia. Findings show that all respondents have visited Malaysia at least between once or twice (Figure 5.12) and this is a good indicator that MTPB has established good partnership where the service providers can draw from their personal experience when promoting Malaysia.

**Figure 5.12 Travel advisers' visits to Malaysia**



Therefore in the following two questions on Malaysia is a must visit destination and the appropriateness of the theme Malaysia truly Asia representing Malaysian image, the travel advisers would be able to give their views from their experience rather than perception alone.

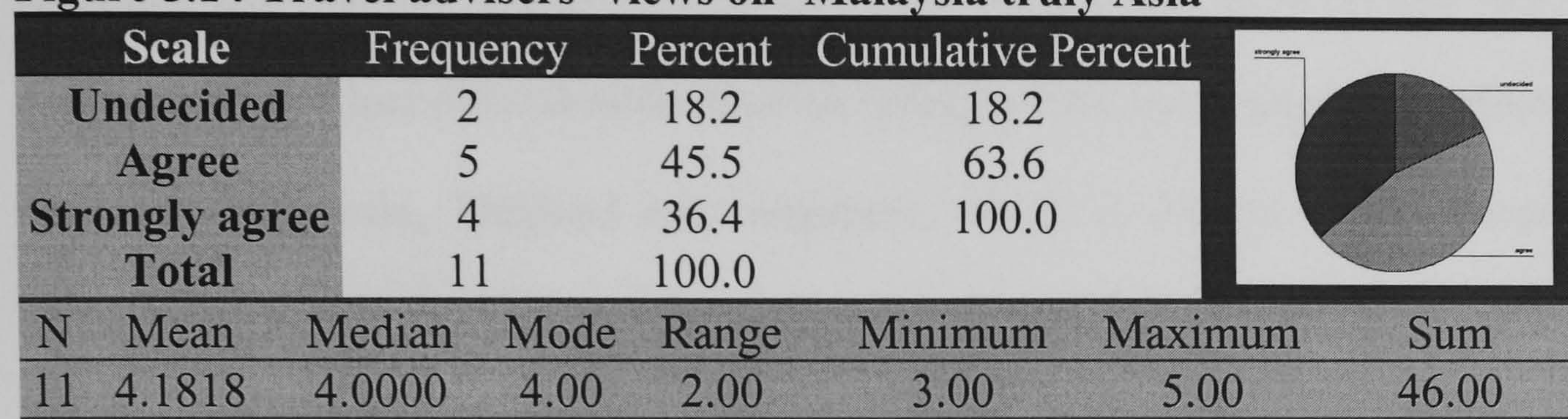
**Figure 5.13 Travel advisers' views on Malaysia as a 'must visit' destination**



On both sets of questions as per figures 5.13 and 5.14, the findings were highly favourable with a slight indication of ambivalence. However, it is the travel advisers that we are discussing about and not the tourists; these are the intermediaries who at

least by theory play an influencing role to promote Malaysia to potential tourists. Even the slightest of ambivalence can be evidence as to why tourists don't find the travel advisers playing an influencing role in the pre-departure decision making as presented in earlier discussion.

**Figure 5.14 Travel advisers' views on 'Malaysia truly Asia'**



Thus, it is of utmost importance that the travel advisers are both confident and motivated to sell Malaysia as a destination. Relevant parties concerning this issue namely MTPB should develop ways and means to both motivate and create awareness so that the positioning of Malaysian image can see success.

The following set of questions is free elicitation by character. The first amongst these questions asks the travel advisers on their views on what features they feel should be emphasised in order to create a stronger Malaysian image. The comments includes that emphasis should be given to increase the qualities of adventure/eco- tours. The need to work on younger and livelier audience was also highlighted. Multicultural and pluralism was another area the respondents felt Malaysia should work on. On the specifics of tourism products, respondents indicated that wildlife, diving, scenery, beauty, Sabah as a destination, beaches, value for money, cuisine, friendliness and

choice of hotels requires strengthening of image to have a competitive edge over its contenders offering similar products.

When asked which destinations the travel advisers felt were similar to Malaysia, the outcome, besides the expected, revealed some interesting ones mainly due to the similarity of product offered rather than the geographical association. Therefore, beside the usual Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore, which is similar as mentioned above mainly due to geographical, and to some extent cultural association, the Caribbean was the surprise addition, which had similarity in terms of beaches, climate and tropical environment. This similarity also is a concern to Malaysia as the contenders for such image are growing larger and Malaysia will need to be on her toes to provide the state of art image if to win and lure tourists from these competitors.

The final bit of the free elicitation question is similar to that of the one presented to the tourists where the respondents (travel advisers) are asked to express the first five words that comes to their minds on the five destinations provided in this word association exercise. The five destinations are Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, Hong Kong and Malaysia. The selection of the countries (destinations) is based upon the findings of the initial exploratory study where these countries posed direct competition to Malaysia. This exercise as per table 5.18 will not only bring forth the images associated to each destination, but will also provide an opportunity to assess the strength and weakness Malaysia has as compared to its competitors.

**Table 5.18 Travel advisers' image of Malaysia and competitors- free elicitation**

Image \ Destination	Malaysia	Thailand	Singapore	Indonesia	Hong Kong
1- Weather/climate	1	1			
2- Value	2	1		1	
3- Friendly		1			
4- Exotic/beauty	1	1		2	
5- Busy		3		1	5
6- Exciting/Fun		1			3
7- Food/Cuisine	2	2	1	1	2
8- Islamic				1	
9- Faces/people/culture	2	4	5	2	3
10- Clean/sterile			2		
11- Dirty/smelly		1		1	
12- Jungle/Tropical	4				
13- Modern/Hi-tech					3
14- Shopping	1		3		3
15- Safe/peaceful			1	1	
16- Beach	4	4	1	1	
17- Petronas Tower	1				
18- Bali				1	
19- Diving	1				
20- Boring/Dull			2		
21- Kuala Lumpur	1				
22- Jakarta				1	

The words associated with the destinations have both similarities and differences when compared between travel adviser and tour operators. Prior to discussing the similarities, it will be interesting to probe into the differences revealing the attitudes of both parties on how they perceive images of each destination. To begin with, 9 out of the 29 images that appeared as images amongst tourist did not emerge during the word association exercise amongst the travel advisers. These images are namely hot/humid, scam/drugs/sex, police, unstable/danger, SARS, expensive, massage, transit and

unfriendly. If observed carefully, may be with the exception of massage, the remaining 8 images are unfavourable. Either consciously or subconsciously, the travel advisers being the intermediaries promoting these destinations choose to omit unfavourable words. Obviously, these travel advisers realise that a destination would sell well when promoted as lovely climate and weather instead of saying the destination is hot and humid. Similarly, though there may be some group of travellers who would want to experience and explore the underworld (scam/drugs/sex) of tourism, the travel advisers will be in the losing end when promoting to a more moderate travel group like the family holidaymakers who may perceive such attributes as harmful. In a similar manner, the downbeat images like SARS, expensive, to some extent transit and unfriendly images are not the words travel advisers prefer to associate these destinations to as it may jeopardise their business. Therefore, the remaining similar images between the travel advisers and tourists are mostly favourable, hence creating difficulty for a buyer (tourists) to decide on which product to purchase as in terms of geographical and cultural attributes these destinations offer similar features. Now it becomes no surprise when the tourists say that travel advisers don't play an influencing role in the decision making process. A good example is that of Indonesian image of political unrest/instability as a known fact and that clearly stands out in the word association exercise amongst the tourists, but when a travel adviser says it is safe/peaceful then this creates doubt in the minds of the buyer (tourist) on how trustworthy these intermediaries are. It is not an easy task to monitor this issue since it is a business and the main motive of these service providers will be in term of return on

investment. However, if NTOs like the MTPB do not monitor such discrepancy between perceived and actual image of a destination, a chain reaction through other mode of communications (i.e. word of mouth, media) can cause long term detrimental effect on the image of a destination; in particular that of Malaysia for this study.

However, not all intermediaries may provide such exaggerated information, as it is evident through the two additional images that emerged amongst the travel advisers and not the tourists. One of the two images is unique to a specific destination (Jakarta for Indonesia) and the other image that emerged is the one (dirty/smelly) that reflects that the travel advisers do provide the actual image of a destination. It is not an easy task to say a destinations image is unfavourable than to sell it, but at least this will win over the confidence of the buyer who from this information can be psychologically, physically and medically prepared to experience the destination of he/she still decides to go ahead despite the unfavourable circumstances. From a travel advisers' stance there are always other ways to make money of unfavourable images; for instance by selling travel insurance and travel gadgets that will make the tourist feel well equipped to travel to a destination. The dangers of this augmented tourism products are that the travel advisers don't create unnecessary unfavourable images just to sell these add on services.

However, the travel advisers' response from the above word association exercise shows that Malaysia is not perceived to have any unfavourable images. Amongst the two destinations with unfavourable images (dirty/smelly) are Indonesia and Thailand who



also from the exercise above appear to be the closest competitors for Malaysia in terms of products offered. This does not mean that Malaysia has a totally advantageous position over its competitors, but this should be seen as a welcomed outcome, which should be maintained. Along with this positive outcome, if Malaysia can up her tempo on providing more favourable images in culture/history/arts, friendliness, excitement/fun and shopping, the future for Malaysian tourism looks encouraging.

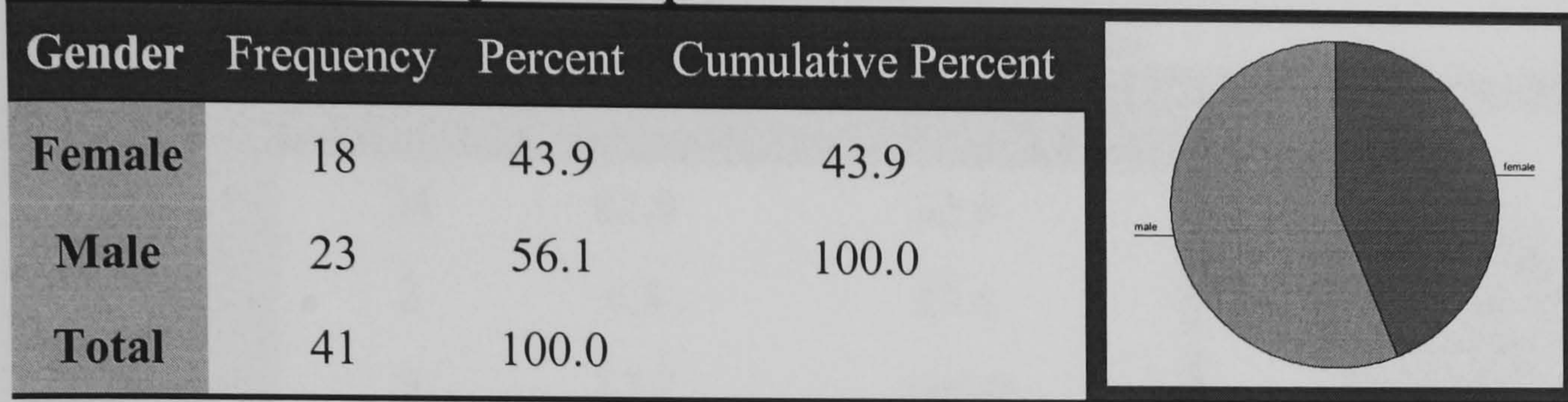
On a different note and as an extension of the experience/perception component, the travel advisers' business setting was assessed. This is an area where the responses were very poor maybe due to the confidentiality policy that each organisation may hold. However little information, a decision of not to include these findings may see some essential points that could be used in future research lost. Thus, in a similar way this study has turned into; from probabilistic to non-probabilistic, from inferential to descriptive, this discussion should be treated as a building block. Of the few travel advisers that responded, it appears that none were actually specialising in a particular destination. Most of these respondents promoted all regions inclusive of USA, Europe and the Far East of which only between 10-30% of their promotional activity focused on the Far East region. Amongst the Far East region, Thailand and Malaysia stood out as destinations that were given more emphasis in promotional activities followed by Singapore and Hong Kong. As for Indonesia, it was indicated either of a permanent or temporary halt in promotional activity as present situation does not appear to be attractive to lure tourist. Most respondents revealed that revenue were mainly from

selling independent and inclusive holidays with only a few stating business and VFR as their revenue generating market. VFR and business as well as students market are potential area MTPB can tap into to broaden its range of market segment and product offerings. All respondents agreed that Malaysia is featured in their promotional literature. However, very few had complete control of the lay out and content of the literature with most respondents stating that they had shared control of what should appear in the literature. Shared control was explained as working in conjunction with the marketing team, NTO (MTPB), Airlines and other tourism suppliers like the reservation manager of the hotel chains. 9 out of the 11 respondents were tour operators with the remaining two indicating their nature of business as travel agent and both (tour operator and travel agent).

#### **5.2.10 Demographic profile**

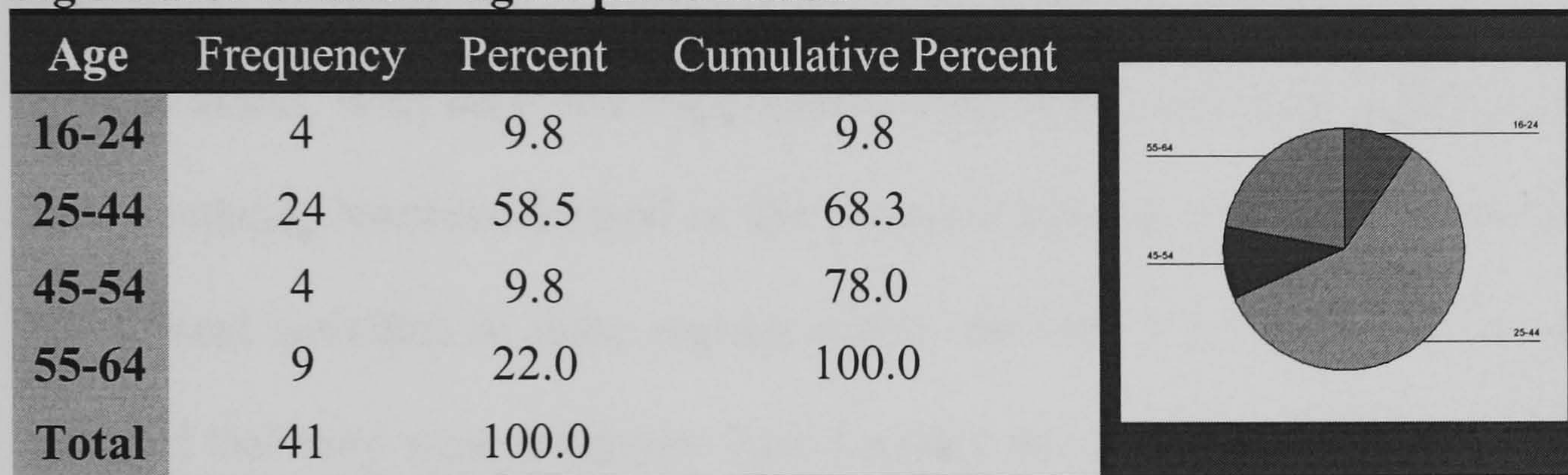
The demographic profiles of both tourists and travel adviser are assessed and will be presented separately. The purpose of this profile is to provide an account of representation of respondents, which could be useful in terms of target marketing and market segmentation from the tourists' response, and the profile could be useful to understand the attitude and personality of the travel advisers on what they think of Malaysia as a destination. Both the assessment as mentioned above will be carried out through cross tabulating the demographic variables against the dependent variable of this study; the overall destination image of Malaysia.

**Figure 5.15 Tourists' gender representation**



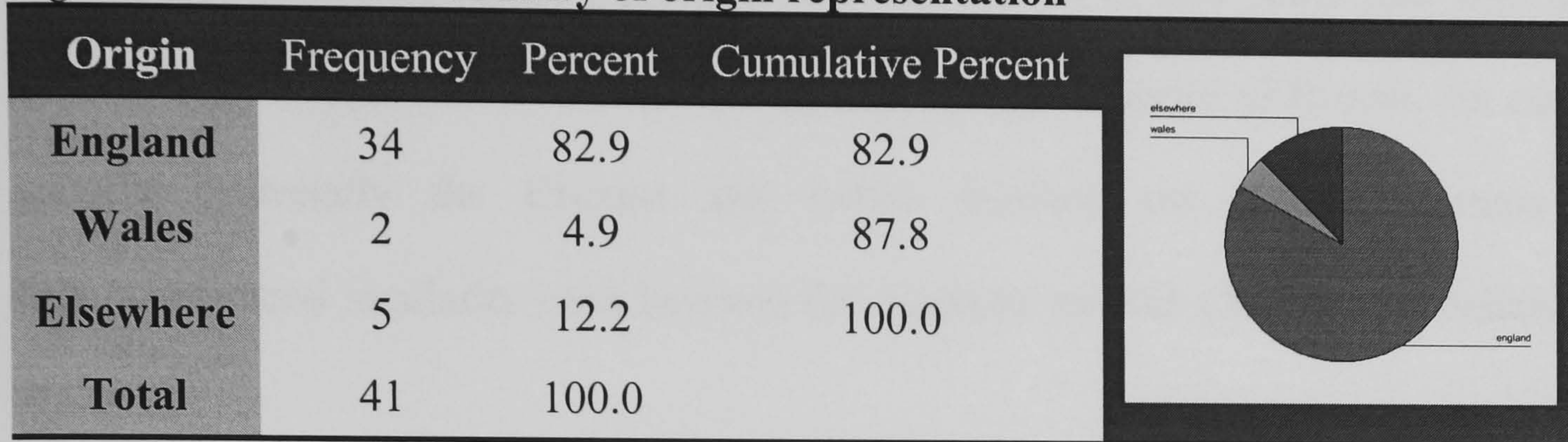
Prior to cross tabulation, the demographic variables are explained independently. Though not equal, the representation of both male and female respondents as per figure 5.15 provides a balance picture.

**Figure 5.16 Tourists' age representation**



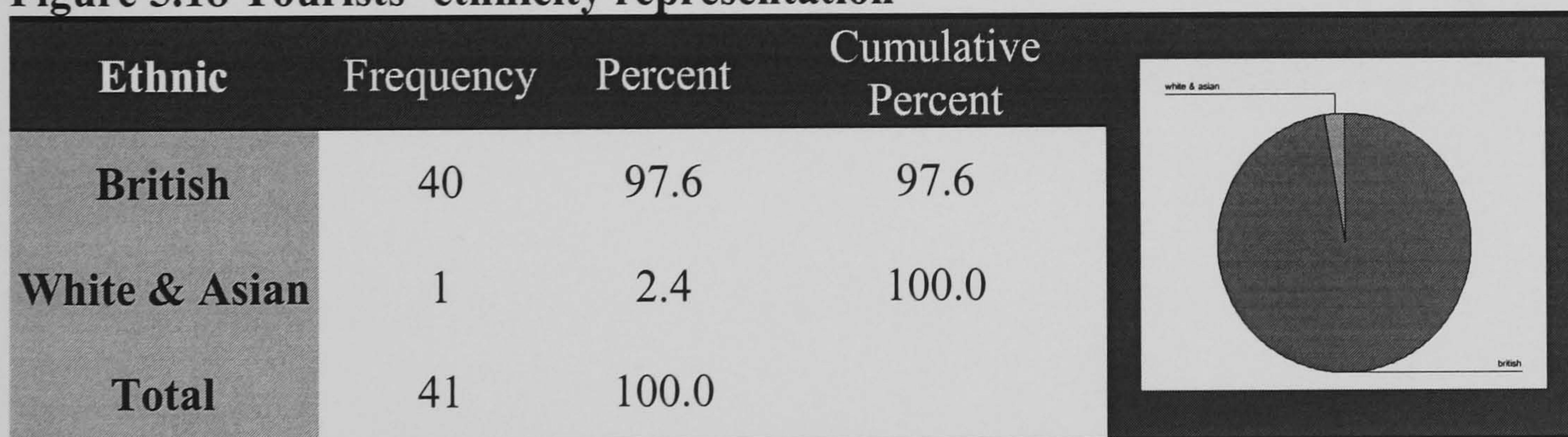
However in the case of respondents' age (Figure 5.16), the majority fell into the 25-44 year old category. It gives a hint that the youth market has not been totally explored which paves way for more studies to be undertaken to find out how possibly to make Malaysia attractive for this target market. The senior citizen group had a larger percentage than the youth but still may require specialised promotion to lure this group as well as they may have good spending power.

**Figure 5.17 Tourists' country of origin representation**



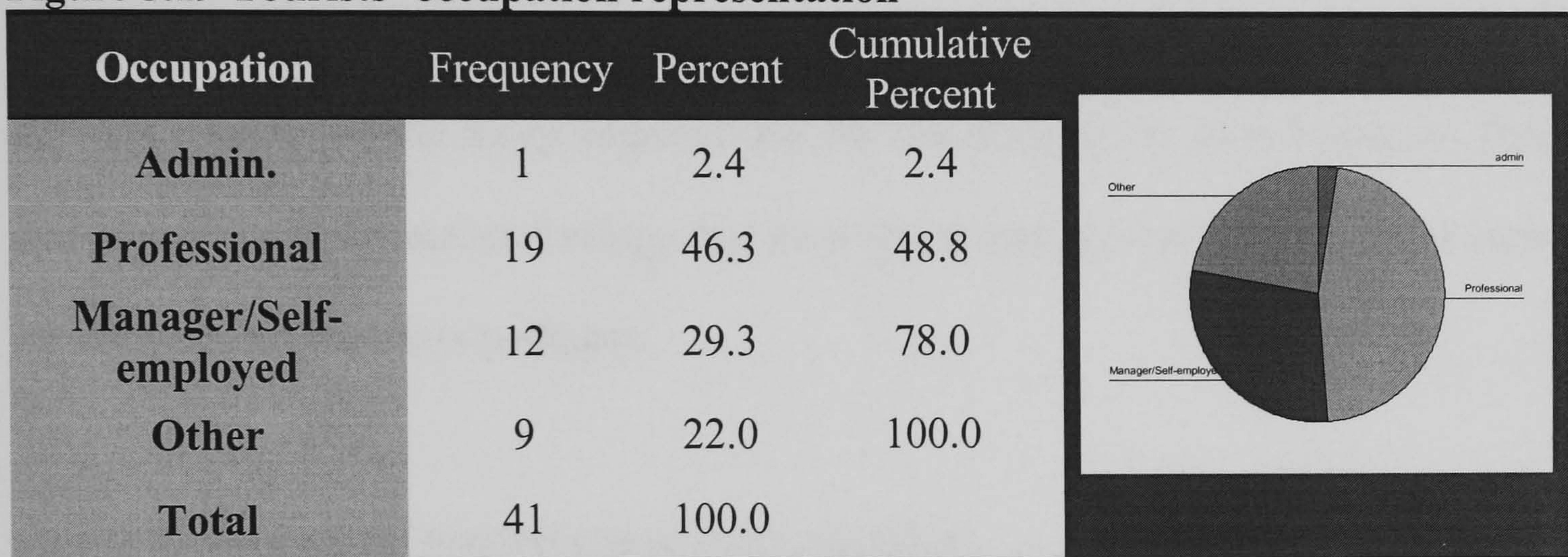
Moving on from age is to explore the country of origin (Figure 5.17) the respondents have come from. Though it is fact that majority of the UK population is concentrated in England, it should not be a reason why promotional activities should be limited to England alone. With only one respondent stating Wales and none indicating there are from Scotland, Northern Ireland or the Channel Islands; it is a reflection of lack of promotional activities in these regions within the UK. Even those who stated others indicated that they were originally from England but at present residing in Russia and Singapore as expatriates.

**Figure 5.18 Tourists' ethnicity representation**



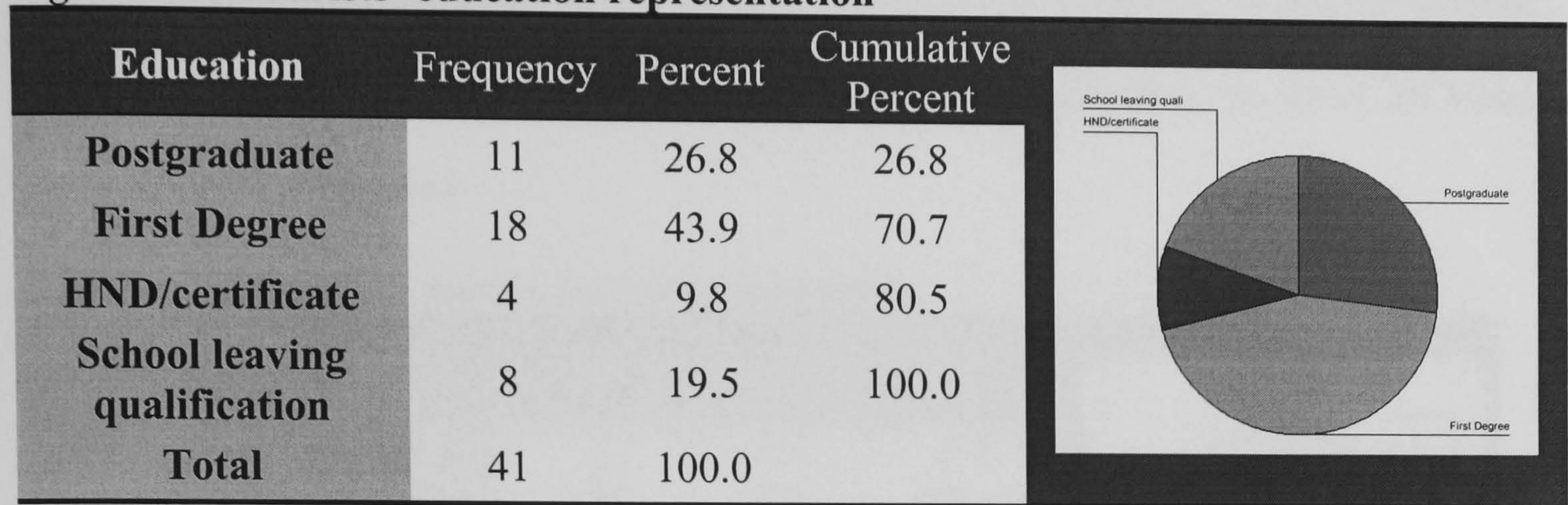
The UK being amongst a highly plural society compared to its European neighbours yet did not represent its pluralism amongst the respondents of this study just with one exception. Although the UK is represented with a large majority of British, the ethnic minority especially the Chinese and Indian markets are potential groups as cultural/ancestral similarity exist between this segment and the Chinese and Indians in Malaysia.

**Figure 5.19 Tourists' occupation representation**



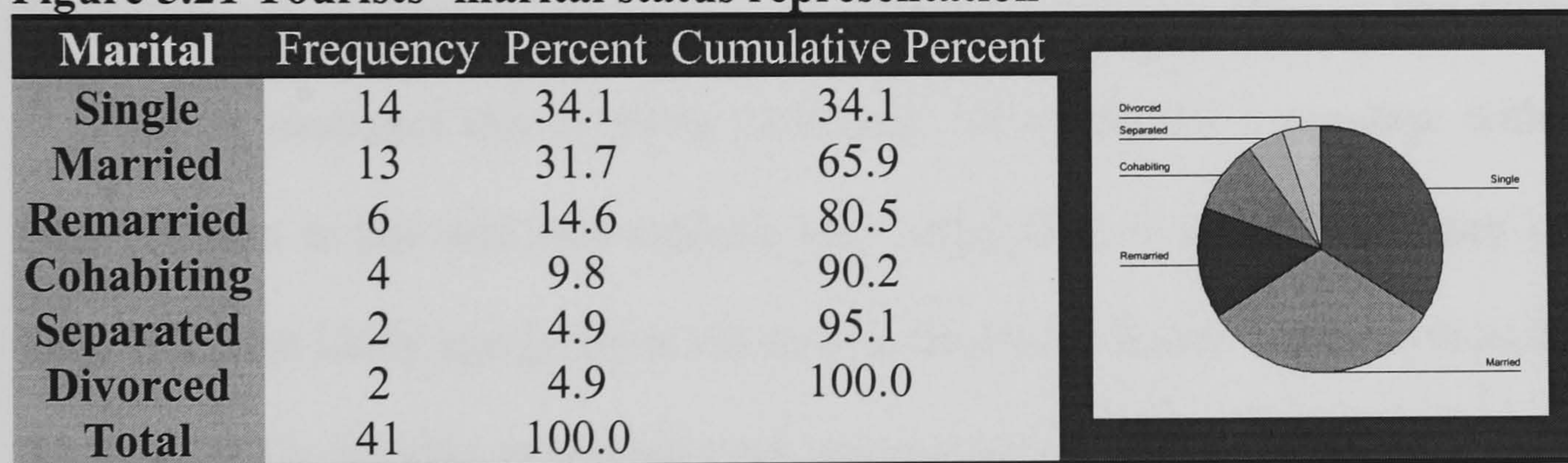
On occupation (Figure 5.19), the majority of respondents fell into the professional category followed by manager/self-employed. This also correlates with the education level (Figure 5.20) where the majority of respondents have attained at least a first degree.

**Figure 5.20 Tourists' education representation**



Therefore, it gives an impression that this group of people who are professionals and highly educated who definitely would be more independent in their thoughts and decision making are the major segment that are travelling as far as to Malaysia. This also correlates to the earlier findings that most travel packages sold by travel advisers are independent travellers packages.

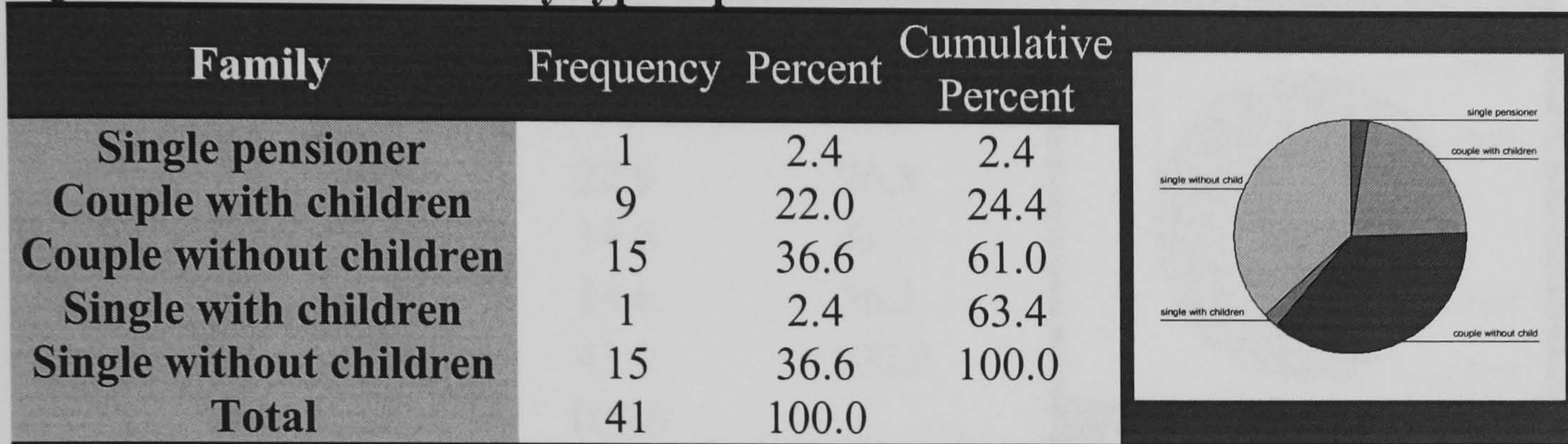
**Figure 5.21 Tourists' marital status representation**



The marital status (Figure 5.21) statistics further strengthen the argument on as independent travellers holding a major market share in visiting Malaysia. As much as it is evident that a high percentage of singles translating to more independent travellers, it is also important to assess the high percentage of travellers who are married. If married

and with family, the travellers may be less adventurous as compared to single travellers hence opting out to all inclusive packages which is less hassle in terms of travel planning and preparation.

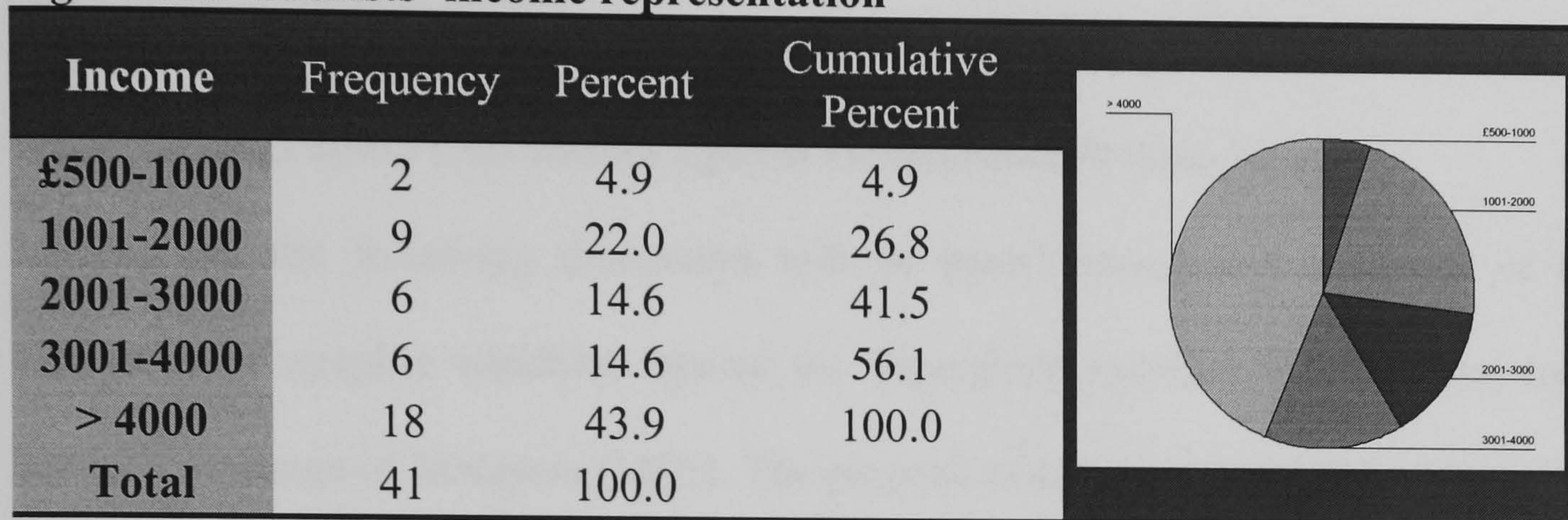
**Figure 5.22 Tourists' family type representation**



However, when the family type (Figure 5.22) the tourists belongs to be examined, the majority were single without children and couple without children. This explains why even with a high percentage of people indicating of their married status, the independent travellers category still remains favourable. Another reason for a high percentage of couples married with no children could be due to the increase in honeymoon packages that is being promoted. However, the percentage with couple with children is less and this explains why respondent in the age category of 45-54 being the most likely age group to travel with family are lesser. This also is an indicator that the family holiday promotions are not attractive, hence MTPB will have to put more emphasis in tackling this target market since Malaysia already has a favourable image in terms of safety. What could be promoted in future is on the facilities available when tourists are travelling with their children. For instance availability of baby feeding and changing facility or whether the destination is 'buggy' friendly can be highlighted.

And if these types of facilities are not in place, then it is time to incorporate such facilities in future planning and development of tourism amenities.

**Figure 5.23 Tourists' income representation**



The final bit of the demographic profile on assessing the income (Figure 5.23) group the respondents fall into reveals and further establishes and explains the strong correlation between independent travellers, professional occupation, highly educated to the tourists earning power. Majority of respondent are in the earning bracket of more than £4000 per month. Although there are a fair number of respondent earning between £1001-£2002 could travel to Malaysia the statistic could definitely see some improvement. What is worrying though is the lower income group, which could be students or non-professional whose earnings are lower. Though some respondents have earlier indicated that Malaysia is a value for money destination, it may not appear to fully true since from the statistics above this lower income group appear not to have the affordability for a holiday in Malaysia. It is a positive sign that high earners are coming to Malaysia because these groups will also be the high spenders contributing an awesome amount of foreign exchange into Malaysians' tourism economy. However,



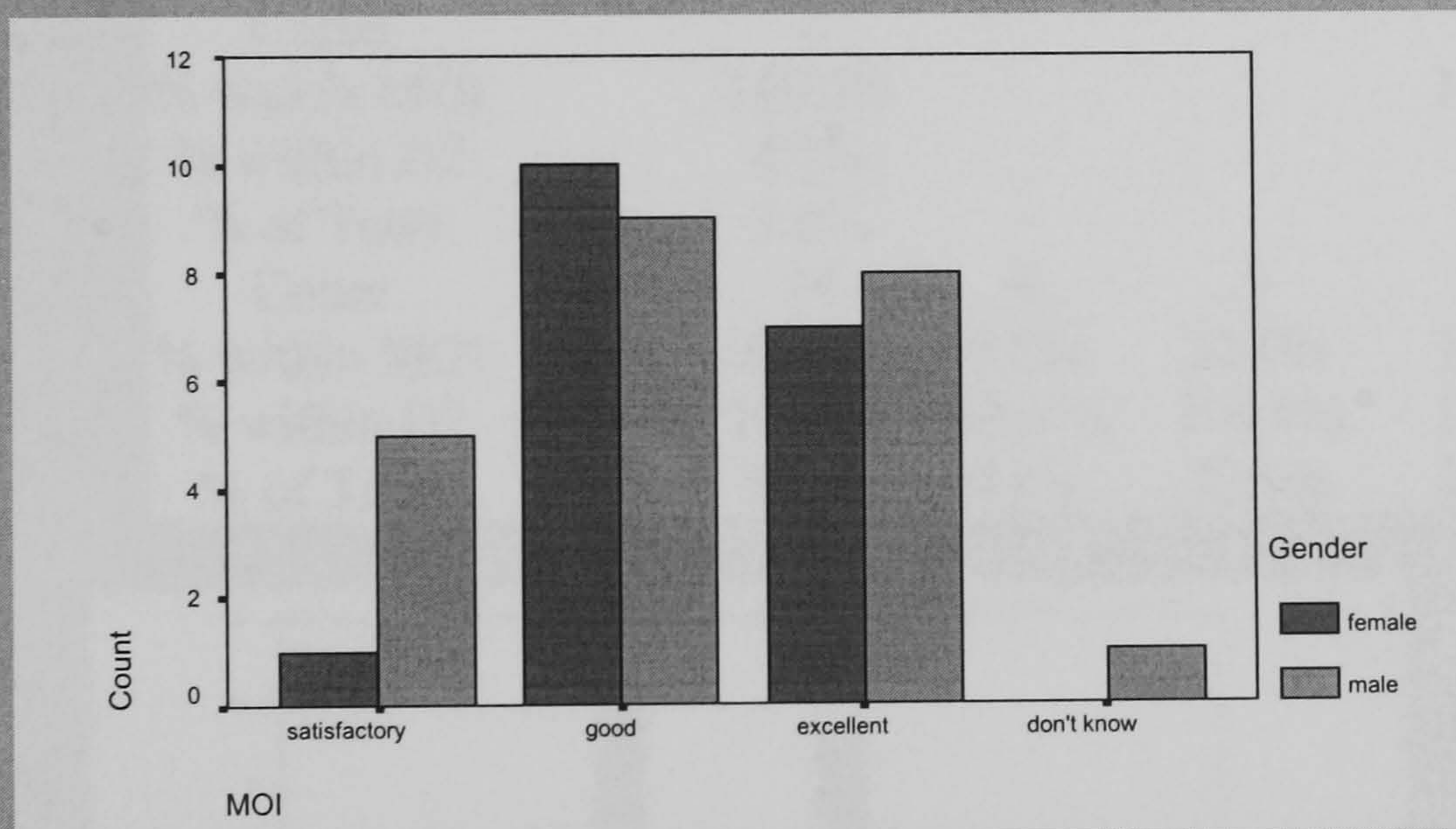
during low seasons and during difficult times (SARS, 9/11, Bali bombing) a smart pricing tactic which will enable even the lower income category will be a strategy that should be kept in mind to increase tourism receipts.

#### **5.2.11 Demographic Correlation against Overall Destination Image**

Moving on, the following discussion will be based upon the assessment of these tourists' demographic variables against the dependent variable of this study; overall destination image of Malaysia (MOI). The purpose of this discussion is to further probe into the strengths and weaknesses of these market segments and on thoughts to move forward to capitalise on the markets that are under performing. The first amongst this cross tabulation exercise looks at gender and the Malaysian overall image (MOI).

**Figure 5.24 Cross tabulation of Tourists' gender against MOI**

MOI	Description	Gender (D1)		Total
		Female	Male	
Satisfactory	Count	1	5	6
	% within MOI	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
	% within D1	5.6%	21.7%	14.6%
	% of Total	2.4%	12.2%	14.6%
Good	Count	10	9	19
	% within MOI	52.6%	47.4%	100.0%
	% within D1	55.6%	39.1%	46.3%
	% of Total	24.4%	22.0%	46.3%
Excellent	Count	7	8	15
	% within MOI	46.7%	53.3%	100.0%
	% within D1	38.9%	34.8%	36.6%
	% of Total	17.1%	19.5%	36.6%
Don't know	Count		1	1
	% within MOI		100.0%	100.0%
	% within D1		4.3%	2.4%
	% of Total		2.4%	2.4%
Total	Count	18	23	41
	% within MOI	43.9%	56.1%	100.0%
	% within D1	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	43.9%	56.1%	100.0%

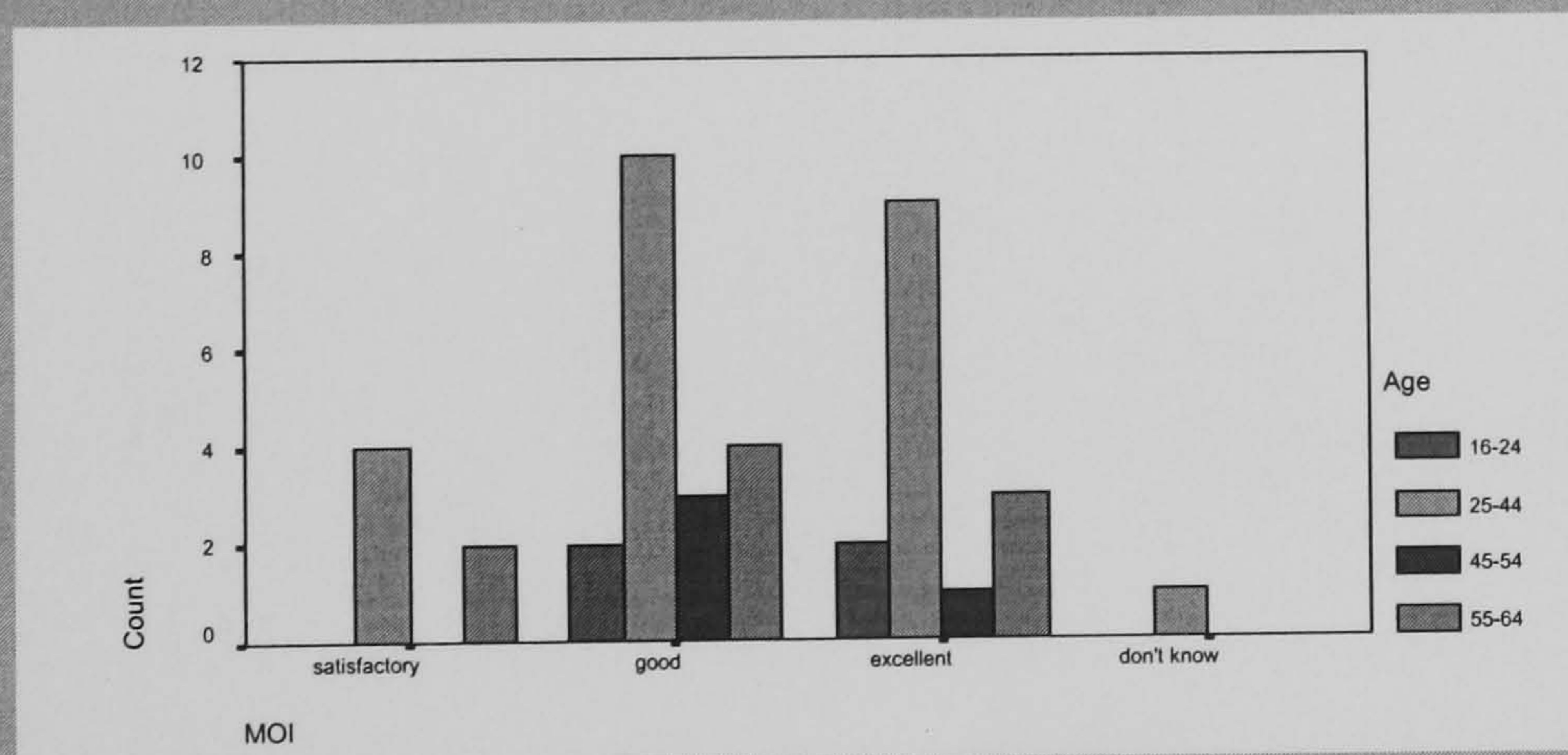


Irrespective of gender (Figure 5.24), the overall image of Malaysia appears to be favourable with only one person stating some ambivalence. Having both genders

equally satisfied is a great sign of the good performance of Malaysia as a destination. However, it must be remembered that these opinions are based upon first hand experience and will be interesting to find out the perception of these tourists prior to experiencing Malaysia.

**Figure 5.25 Cross tabulation of Tourists' age against MOI**

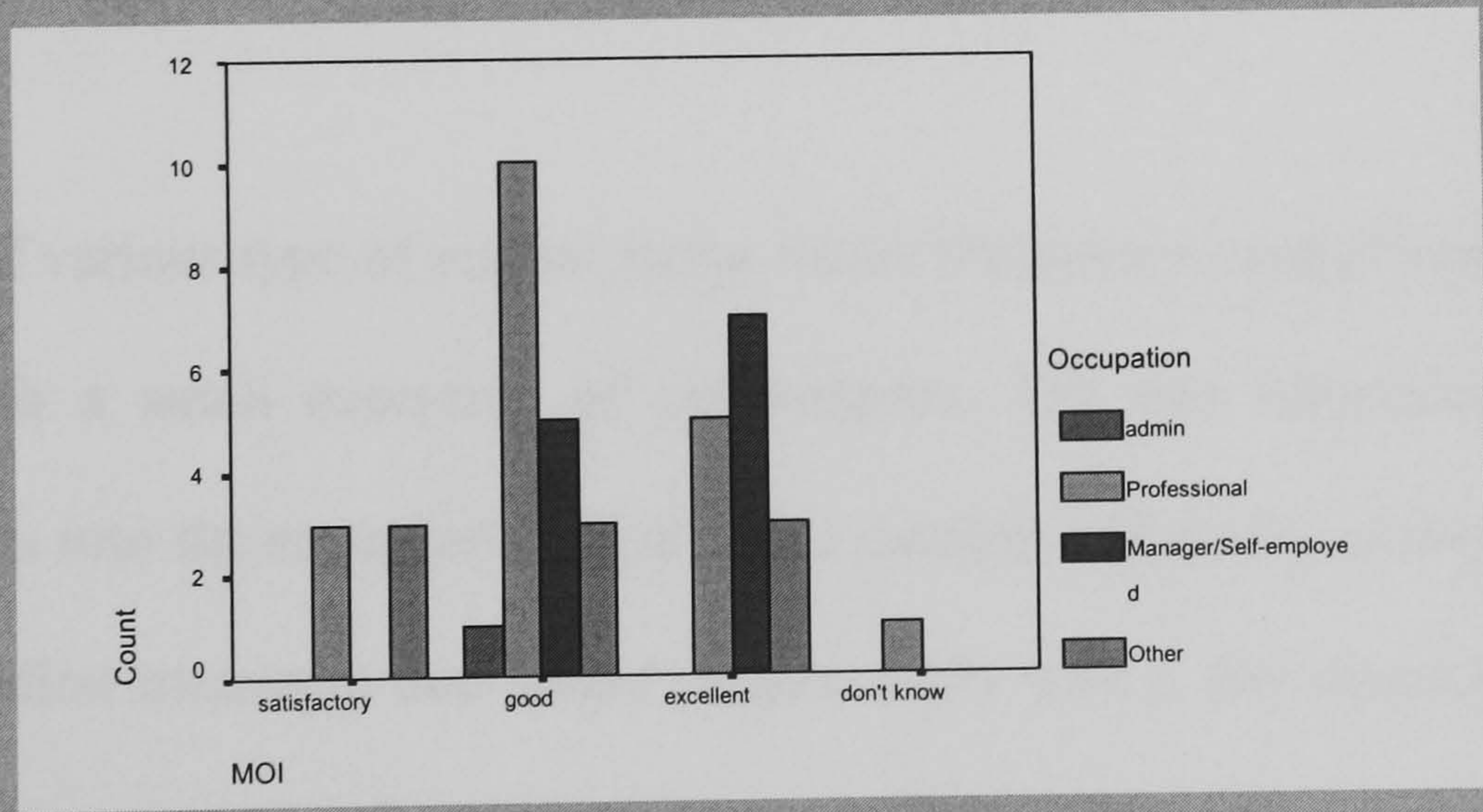
MOI	Description	Age (D2)				Total
		16-24	25-44	45-54	55-64	
<b>Satisfactory</b>	Count		4		2	6
	% within MOI		66.7%		33.3%	100.0%
	% within D2		16.7%		22.2%	14.6%
	% of Total		9.8%		4.9%	14.6%
<b>Good</b>	Count	2	10	3	4	19
	% within MOI	10.5%	52.6%	15.8%	21.1%	100.0%
	% within D2	50.0%	41.7%	75.0%	44.4%	46.3%
	% of Total	4.9%	24.4%	7.3%	9.8%	46.3%
<b>Excellent</b>	Count	2	9	1	3	15
	% within MOI	13.3%	60.0%	6.7%	20.0%	100.0%
	% within D2	50.0%	37.5%	25.0%	33.3%	36.6%
	% of Total	4.9%	22.0%	2.4%	7.3%	36.6%
<b>Don't know</b>	Count		1			1
	% within MOI		100.0%			100.0%
	% within D2		4.2%			2.4%
	% of Total		2.4%			2.4%
<b>Total</b>	Count	4	24	4	9	41
	% within MOI	9.8%	58.5%	9.8%	22.0%	100.0%
	% within D2	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	9.8%	58.5%	9.8%	22.0%	100.0%



Similar to gender, the age (Figure 5.25) factor too did not see much discrepancy in terms of satisfaction on the overall image of Malaysia. The participants of survey stating good and excellent clearly outweigh the one respondent who expressed some ambivalence. The youth market (16-24) though not many that responded to make any sort of generalisation, indicates a highly favourable image of Malaysia, which should be taken seriously to enhance promotion on this market segment. There are many ways to go about tapping into the youth market. Tying up with STA travel where the youth market normally get information on their holidays is one way. On top of that sponsoring such travel agents to organise a get familiar party on Malaysia through those who have been to Malaysia plus through multimedia programmes will further enhance this youth group to travel to Malaysia.

**Figure 5.26 Cross tabulation of Tourists' occupation against MOI**

MOI	Description	Occupation (D5)				Total
		Admin	Professional	Manager/Self-employed	Other	
<b>Satisfactory</b>	Count		3		3	6
	% within MOI		50.0%		50.0%	100.0%
	% within D5		15.8%		33.3%	14.6%
	% of Total		7.3%		7.3%	14.6%
<b>Good</b>	Count	1	10	5	3	19
	% within MOI	5.3%	52.6%	26.3%	15.8%	100.0%
	% within D5	100.0%	52.6%	41.7%	33.3%	46.3%
	% of Total	2.4%	24.4%	12.2%	7.3%	46.3%
<b>Excellent</b>	Count		5	7	3	15
	% within MOI		33.3%	46.7%	20.0%	100.0%
	% within D5		26.3%	58.3%	33.3%	36.6%
	% of Total		12.2%	17.1%	7.3%	36.6%
<b>Don't know</b>	Count		1			1
	% within MOI		100.0%			100.0%
	% within D5		5.3%			2.4%
	% of Total		2.4%			2.4%
<b>Total</b>	Count	1	19	12	9	41
	% within MOI	2.4%	46.3%	29.3%	22.0%	100.0%
	% within D5	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	2.4%	46.3%	29.3%	22.0%	100.0%



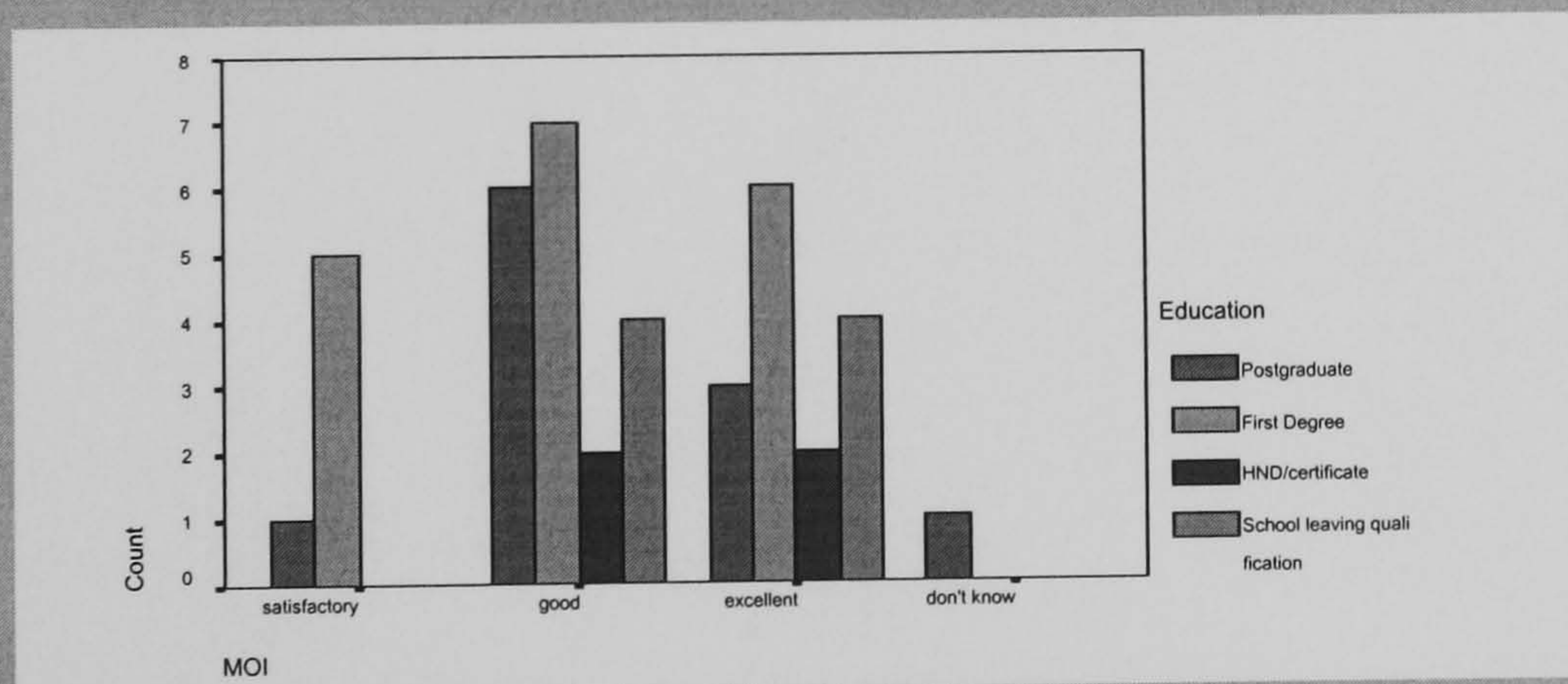
On the relationship between occupation (Figure 5.26) and overall image of Malaysia it appears that the respondents of managerial/self-employed and administration category were highly satisfied. Although satisfaction level was high amongst those respondents who are professionals and those who have stated other (mainly housewives), there has been a tendency of them choosing an ambivalent or just satisfied feeling as well. Therefore care should be taken so that an uncertainty image does not linger in the minds of these market segments.

On education (Figure 5.27) and overall image, it appears that the lower the education level of the respondents the easier it is to satisfy as compared to the respondents who have attained higher qualifications whereby the complexity and demands becomes higher. This is evident from Figure 5.27 where those with higher degrees show uncertainty and can be just satisfied as compared to the lower education level group who were highly satisfied. This situation though is not alarming as in general the majority of these respondents appear to be fairly satisfied.

Respondents of various type of marital status found Malaysia's overall image as highly favourable with a small exception of ambivalence. The one respondent who was ambivalent falls into the separated marital status category. Majority of the respondents were married (first marriage) and single (Figure 5.28) with a few respondents stating the marital; status as remarried, cohabiting, separated and divorced.

**Figure 5.27 Cross tabulation of Tourists' education against MOI**

MOI	Description	Education (D6)				Total
		Post - graduate	First Degree	HND /certificate	School leaving qualification	
<b>Satisfactory</b>	Count	1	5			6
	% within MOI	16.7%	83.3%			100.0%
	% within D6	9.1%	27.8%			14.6%
	% of Total	2.4%	12.2%			14.6%
<b>Good</b>	Count	6	7	2	4	19
	% within MOI	31.6%	36.8%	10.5%	21.1%	100.0%
	% within D6	54.5%	38.9%	50.0%	50.0%	46.3%
	% of Total	14.6%	17.1%	4.9%	9.8%	46.3%
<b>Excellent</b>	Count	3	6	2	4	15
	% within MOI	20.0%	40.0%	13.3%	26.7%	100.0%
	% within D6	27.3%	33.3%	50.0%	50.0%	36.6%
	% of Total	7.3%	14.6%	4.9%	9.8%	36.6%
<b>Don't know</b>	Count	1				1
	% within MOI	100.0%				100.0%
	% within D6	9.1%				2.4%
	% of Total	2.4%				2.4%
<b>Total</b>	Count	11	18	4	8	41
	% within MOI	26.8%	43.9%	9.8%	19.5%	100.0%
	% within D6	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	26.8%	43.9%	9.8%	19.5%	100.0%

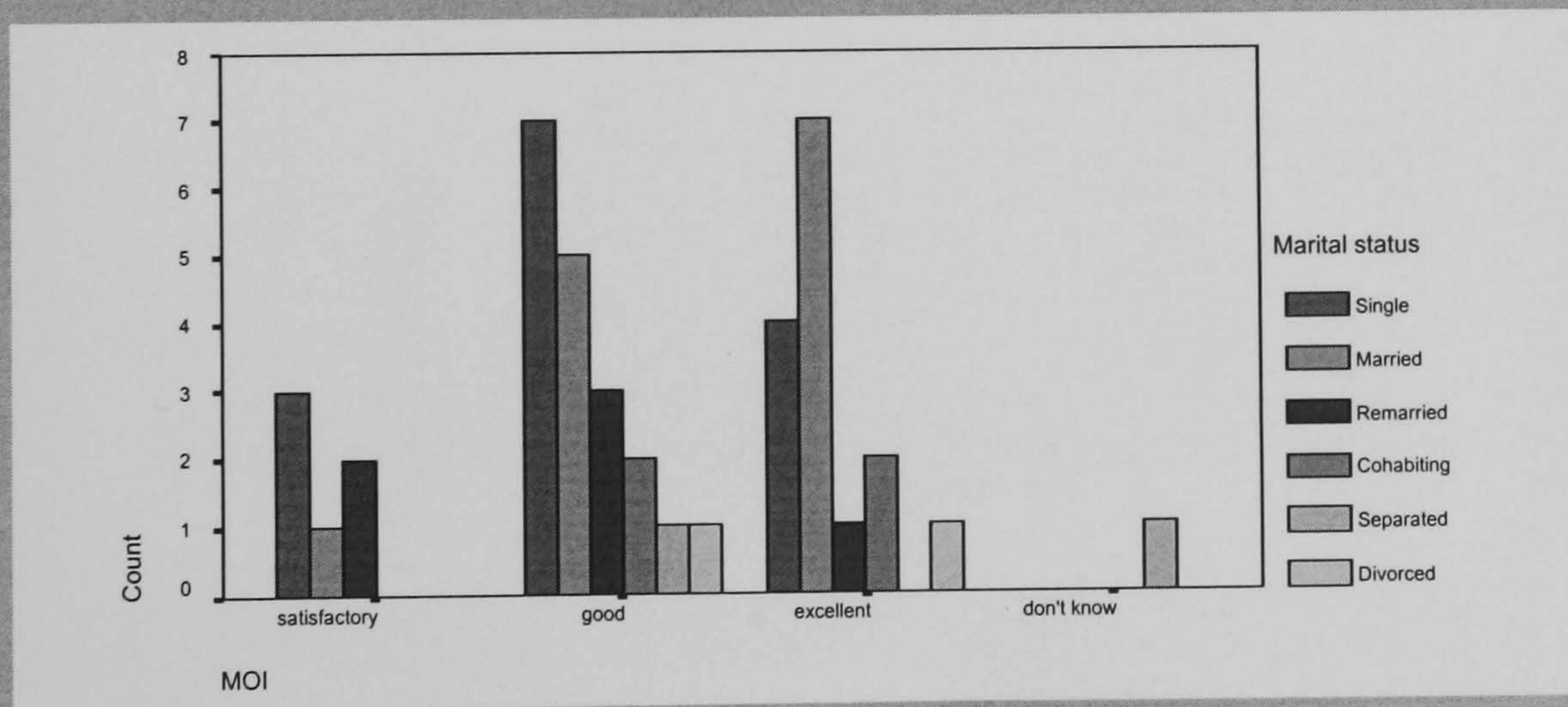


None of the respondents appeared in the widowed and same sex couple category. Separated, divorced and widowed are family statuses where the respondents would have experienced loss of someone they've lived with. Can be an area where therapeutic tourism can be used where relaxation and psychological stress release activities can be introduced to attract such market.



**Figure 5.28 Cross tabulation of Tourists' marital status against MOI**

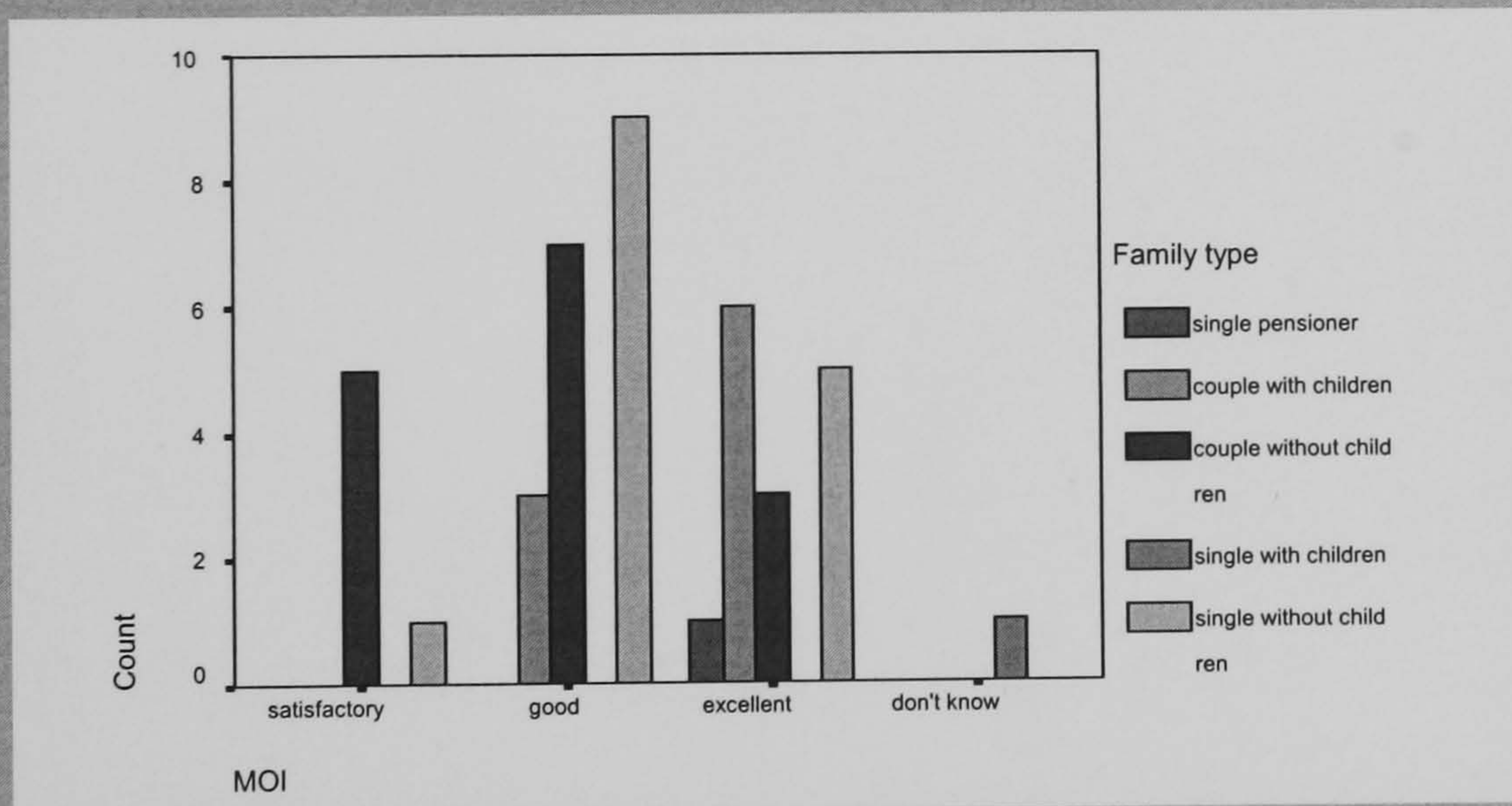
MOI	Description	Marital Status (D7)						Total
		Single	Married	Remarried	Cohabit	Separated	Divorced	
Satisfactory	Count	3	1	2				6
	% within MOI	50.0%	16.7%	33.3%				100.0%
	% within D7	21.4%	7.7%	33.3%				14.6%
	% of Total	7.3%	2.4%	4.9%				14.6%
Good	Count	7	5	3	2	1	1	19
	% within MOI	36.8%	26.3%	15.8%	10.5%	5.3%	5.3%	100.0%
	% within D7	50.0%	38.5%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	46.3%
	% of Total	17.1%	12.2%	7.3%	4.9%	2.4%	2.4%	46.3%
Excellent	Count	4	7	1	2		1	15
	% within MOI	26.7%	46.7%	6.7%	13.3%		6.7%	100.0%
	% within D7	28.6%	53.8%	16.7%	50.0%		50.0%	36.6%
	% of Total	9.8%	17.1%	2.4%	4.9%		2.4%	36.6%
Don't know	Count					1		1
	% within MOI					100.0%		100.0%
	% within D7					50.0%		2.4%
	% of Total					2.4%		2.4%
Total	Count	14	13	6	4	2	2	41
	% within MOI	34.1%	31.7%	14.6%	9.8%	4.9%	4.9%	100.0%
	% within D7	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	34.1%	31.7%	14.6%	9.8%	4.9%	4.9%	100.0%



As for the same sex couple market, though there may not be any prohibitions to enter Malaysia to participate in tourism activities, but to provide specific attractions to capture this market may not be in the agenda of Malaysian tourism as this type of activities will be culturally inappropriate to Malaysia.

**Figure 5.29 Cross tabulation of Tourists' family type against MOI**

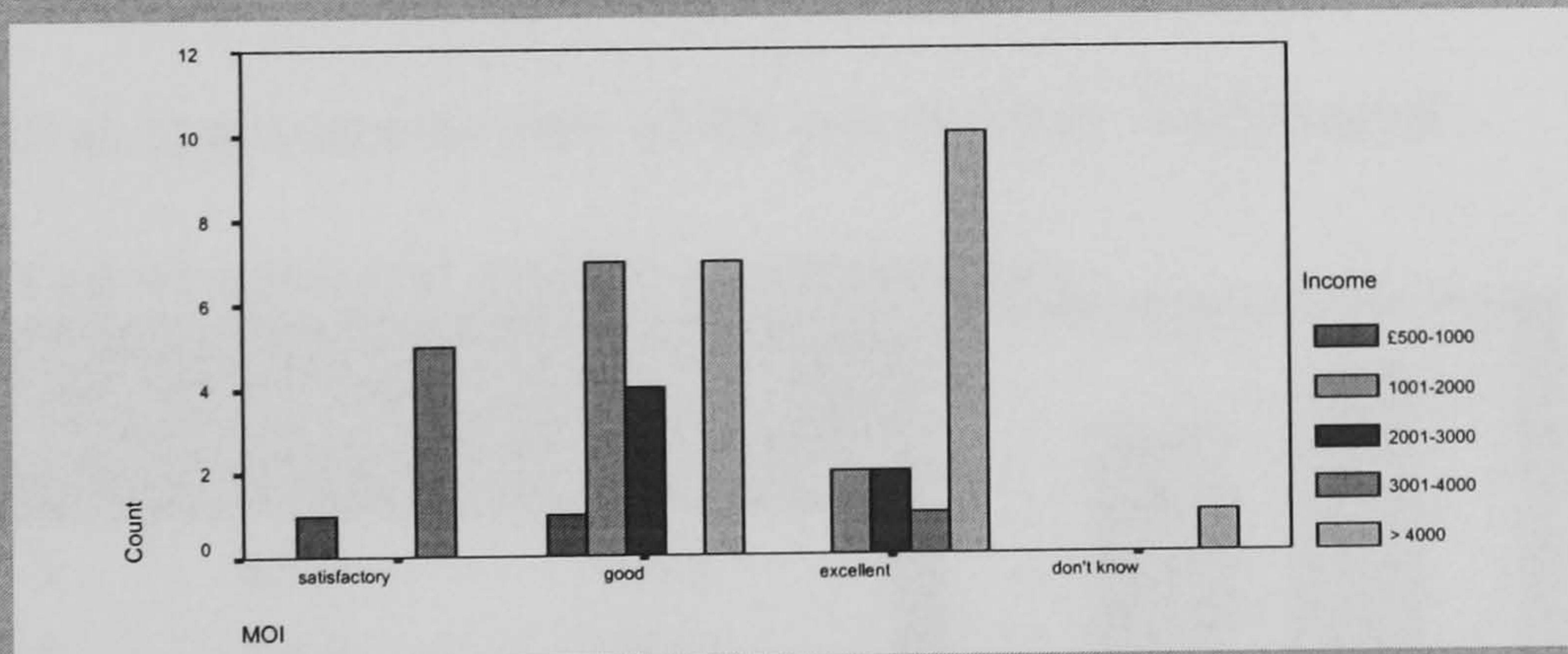
MOI	Description	Family Type (D8)					Total
		Single pensioner	Couple with children	Couple without children	Single with children	Single without children	
<b>Satisfactory</b>	Count			5		1	6
	% within MOI			83.3%		16.7%	100.0%
	% within D8			33.3%		6.7%	14.6%
	% of Total			12.2%		2.4%	14.6%
<b>Good</b>	Count		3	7		9	19
	% within MOI		15.8%	36.8%		47.4%	100.0%
	% within D8		33.3%	46.7%		60.0%	46.3%
	% of Total		7.3%	17.1%		22.0%	46.3%
<b>Excellent</b>	Count	1	6	3		5	15
	% within MOI	6.7%	40.0%	20.0%		33.3%	100.0%
	% within D8	100.0%	66.7%	20.0%		33.3%	36.6%
	% of Total	2.4%	14.6%	7.3%		12.2%	36.6%
<b>Don't know</b>	Count				1		1
	% within MOI				100.0%		100.0%
	% within D8				100.0%		2.4%
	% of Total				2.4%		2.4%
<b>Total</b>	Count	1	9	15	1	15	41
	% within MOI	2.4%	22.0%	36.6%	2.4%	36.6%	100.0%
	% within D8	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	2.4%	22.0%	36.6%	2.4%	36.6%	100.0%



The different family types (Figure 5.29) the respondents belonged to include single pensioner, couple with children, and couple without children, single with children and single without children. All respondents of these various family types with exception to one respondent who expressed indecisiveness expressed of their high level of satisfaction of Malaysia overall image. In terms of market segment, it is the couple without children and single without children are the majority of the respondents. It shows that some effort must be taken to promote Malaysia as a family and children friendly destination.

Figure 5.30 Cross tabulation of Tourists' income against MOI

MOI	Description	Income (£) (D9)					Total
		500-1000	1001-2000	2001-3000	3001-4000	> 4000	
<b>Satisfactory</b>	Count	1			5		6
	% within MOI	16.7%			83.3%		100.0%
	% within D9	50.0%			83.3%		14.6%
	% of Total	2.4%			12.2%		14.6%
<b>Good</b>	Count	1	7	4		7	19
	% within MOI	5.3%	36.8%	21.1%		36.8%	100.0%
	% within D9	50.0%	77.8%	66.7%		38.9%	46.3%
	% of Total	2.4%	17.1%	9.8%		17.1%	46.3%
<b>Excellent</b>	Count		2	2	1	10	15
	% within MOI		13.3%	13.3%	6.7%	66.7%	100.0%
	% within D9		22.2%	33.3%	16.7%	55.6%	36.6%
	% of Total		4.9%	4.9%	2.4%	24.4%	36.6%
<b>Don't know</b>	Count					1	1
	% within MOI					100.0%	100.0%
	% within D9					5.6%	2.4%
	% of Total					2.4%	2.4%
<b>Total</b>	Count	2	9	6	6	18	41
	% within MOI	4.9%	22.0%	14.6%	14.6%	43.9%	100.0%
	% within D9	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	4.9%	22.0%	14.6%	14.6%	43.9%	100.0%

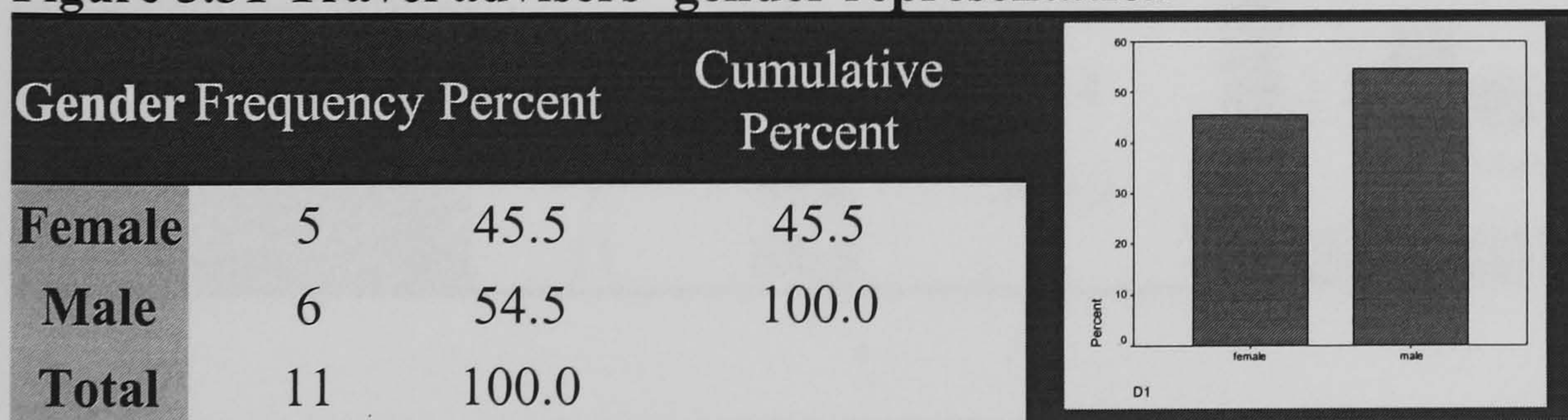


The final bit of the relationship between overall Malaysian image and a demographic variable explores the income (Figure 5.30) component.

What are even worrying are the pensioner market segments with only one respondent in the single pensioner market segment and none for pensioner couple. This group of people who contribute to a large size of the UK population and have earnings just to enjoy must not be ignored. Special packages specifically targeted at these groups must be promoted more actively. As similar to other demographic variables, the overall image appeared to be highly satisfactory. However, the statistics also reveals that the majority of respondents fall into the higher income bracket. This indicates that Malaysia may not have the attractiveness when it comes to value for money, an area worth looking into to capitalise the other market segments as well.

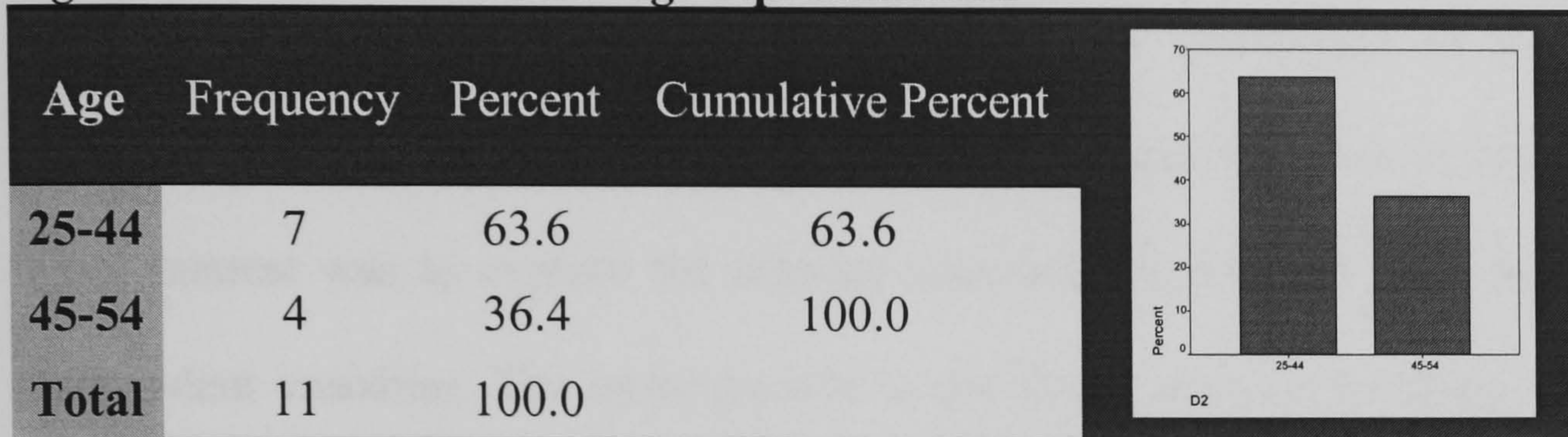
The next part within the demographic section will look into the travel advisers. Having scored 100 % highly favourable results on overall destination image, a cross tabulation of overall image of travel advisers against the demographic variable is not required. However, a summary of the demographic variables of the travel adviser will be presented next as to get an overview of the respondents' background.

**Figure 5.31 Travel advisers' gender representation**



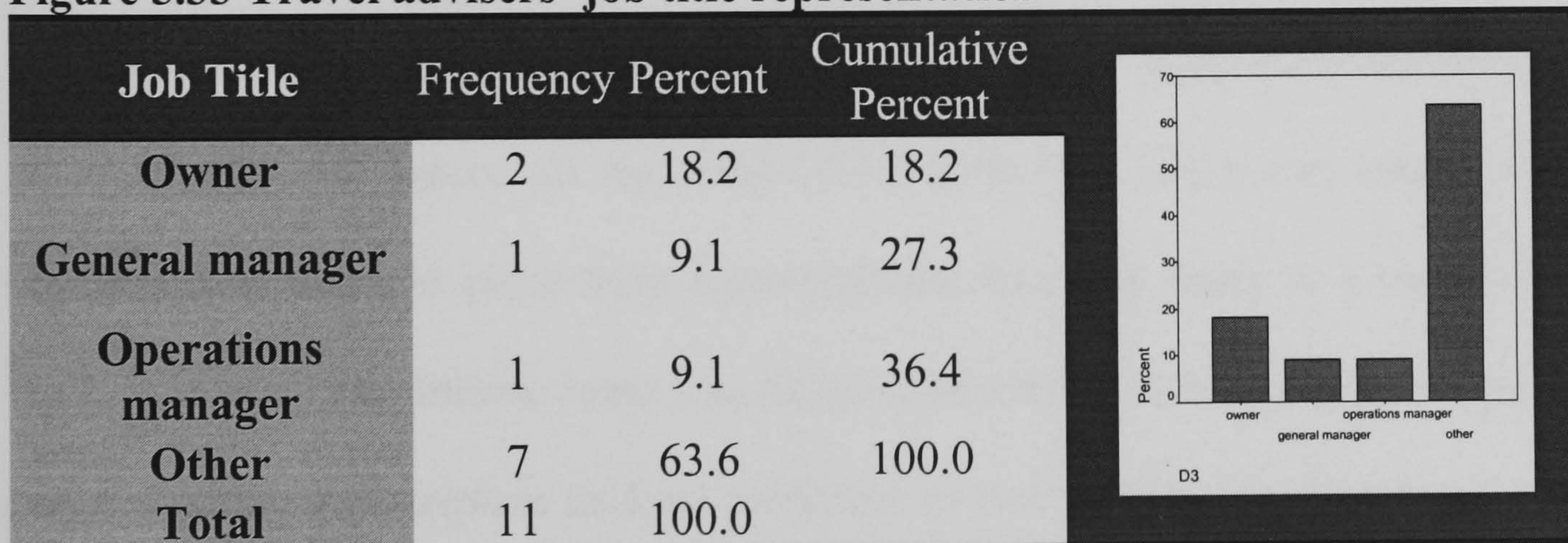
A reasonable balance of respondents between male and female (Figure 5.31) travel advisers participated in answering this questionnaire. The respondents fell into the age (Figure 5.32) categories of 25-44 and 45-54. The other three age groups comprising of 16-24, 55-65 and 66 and above was not represented.

**Figure 5.32 Travel advisers' age representation**



Out of these respondents, the majority that stated their job title (Figure 5.33) as other have indicated their job description in relation to product management. The other respondents who participated include owners, general manager and operations manager. The categories sales consultant and marketing director are not represented.

**Figure 5.33 Travel advisers' job title representation**



Finally, the numbers of years the respondents have been in the organisation varied between a minimum of 1 year up to the maximum of 15 years and the average being 5.6 years.

### **5.3 Knowledge interest**

Initial methodological design for this chapter saw positivism as the preferred philosophical stance to address some parts of the research question of this thesis. The initial interest was to explore the relevant relationships between both dependent and independent variables. The intention was to use factor analysis for deduction purpose and the outcome of the factors to be used in regression analysis to formulate and test the model. However, the challenges faced during the field trip did not allow this research to be carried out using probabilistic sampling technique. When probabilistic sampling is not achieved, then the sample no matter how large will not be a good representation of the population, hence unsuitable for generalisation. Coupled with the issue of non-probabilistic sampling had been the low response rate due to unexpected external interventions as discussed earlier in this chapter. A decision had to be made whether to clearly ignore all the effort taken or to turn this piece, which could be considered as wasteful piece from a probabilistic sampling angle to a useful piece of work. The non-probabilistic route was taken in this effort to be a pragmatic positivist, hence adapting a descriptive analysis technique to turn what would have been wasteful research to useful. It had also been a personal revelation as to how useful descriptive analysis could be to a subject matter, especially when it involves a specific case study



like understanding the meaning and measurement of the destination image of Malaysia. The depth and richness of assessment and discussion may not have been possible if a regimented positivist approach with elimination of many variables had taken place. Hence, this research piece actually has provided a building block platform for further exploration of Malaysia as a destination where the findings and the discussion of this chapter can be used for future theory building rather than theory testing.

## CHAPTER 6

### DESTINATION IMAGERY AND INDUSTRY PLAYERS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The study of tourism destination image (TDI) has taken many valuable approaches. Central to these approaches, whether the subjects being studied are tourist, tour operator or the policy maker; is the human mind and how it makes decision. The focus of this chapter is not to generalise but to understand to what extent people are involved in the tourism industry in general and to what extent these actors/players in the tourism arena contribute to the formation of tourism destination image. At this juncture, it is my belief that general survey response and standard questioning across people may not allow me to understand the tourism destination image phenomena better. Hence, arises the importance to speak to these people and find out what they think, feel and sense about destination image. Therefore unstructured in-depth interview process is adapted. This technique allows the communicators (interlocutors) to speak their mind. This techniques' main strength is to understand people in depth. Thus, the aim of this study is to conduct analyses of the complexity of human issues surrounding the formation of TDI. The decision making process of the industry players is studied in terms of their roles in contributing to destination image. Taking into consideration of the sensitivity of the decision making process, the words uttered by the informant are used to develop categories of decision-making process. Based upon the design principles and data elicitation technique as outlined in chapter 4, the analysis and findings of the

governance of tourism destination image from the industry players' perspective is discussed below.

## **6.2 Data analysis and findings**

Data analysis follows data elicitation, and the broad aim of data analysis is to look for meanings and understanding. A large text corpus is the outcome of the data elicitation from transcribing what has been recorded. The respective respondents then validate this text corpus of its content. The challenge now is on how to analyse this large text corpus to look for the meaning and understanding of destination image. The first challenge though is on how to narrow down on the type of analysis to be used. Various analysis are available amongst which are discourse analysis (Gill, 2000), content analysis (Bauer, 2000) and analysis of conversation and talk (Myers, 2000) to name a few. The overlapping similarities amongst the above-mentioned analyses make it even harder to choose one and are clearly highlighted by (Gaskell, 2000) describing the analysis phase as follows:

In practical terms analysis and interpretation require time and effort and there is no one best method.

Nevertheless, looking back at the aim and scope of this study clarifies the most appropriate method to be used. First and foremost, the aim is to understand the meaning of destination image from the actors who govern the tourism industry. The governance involves high-level decision makers whereby too casual a conversation is not possible. On top of that, a full conversation analysis transcription (Myers, 2000) could include pitch, loudness, pace, audible breaths and expressions like emm..., ah and oh.

Although this all encompassing transcription is in line with the aim not to be deductive in capturing the data, due to the nature of respondents who participated in validating the data, the conversation analysis was not preferred. On the other hand content analysis and the use of computer aided software like the NUDIST was found inappropriate due to the deductive nature of the analysis. Hence, the preferred choice is discourse analysis because it had the balance to conserve the originality of data without much deductive measure to be applied and discourse analysis was also found appropriate based upon the nature of respondents.

### **6.2.1 Discourse Analysis**

Discourse can mean speech, lecture, sermon, treaties and conversation and in the case of this study is the dialogue (in-depth interview) between two interlocutors (interviewer and interviewee) at a time; whereby in total there are 8 interviewees, hence 8 dialogues at different times. The dialogues as mentioned previously, using the in-depth interview data elicitation technique have been transcribed as text corpus. Hence, the aim at this juncture is to analyse these discourses that is in the form of text.

Discourse analysis is derived from various roots or disciplines, which makes it even more challenging to attempt to pick the right one. There are at least 57 varieties (Gill, 2000) of discourse analysis and of these different theoretical traditions and diverse disciplinary locations; linguistics (Fowler et al., 1979; Fairclough, 1989) and philosophy (Fogelin, 1980; Bloor, 1983; Stroll, 2002) are seen to have contributed the most to discourse analyses. The common acceptance for all these variation is that discourse

analysis is a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world) (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). However, after extensive reading, I found Wittgensteinian's approach to discourse analysis suits the best for the overall aim of this thesis. The following part will explain of why Wittgensteinian's approach is preferred as compared to the other discourse analyses.

### **6.2.2 Wittgensteinian Approach to Discourse Analysis**

The Austrian philosophers' aphorism below is what intrigued me the most to dwell into his work:

“ In a conversation: one person throws a ball; the other does not know whether he is supposed to throw it back, or throw it to the third person, or leave it on the ground, or pick it up and put it in his pocket, etc.”. (Wittgenstein L., 1984).

To describe the above language game, let me show the different ways the decision makers (the 8 respondents) chose to answer a similar question in the table below. The question is on their opinion of the strength (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities(O) and threats(T) (SWOT) of the Malaysian tourism industry as highlighted in the topic guide earlier.

**Table 6.1 Language game in discourse analysis.**

	S	W	O	T
R1	<p>“Firstly, high quality facilities, secondly rates; the present FOREX rates, the value of property- a 5 star property here is half the price of a five star property in Jakarta or Bangkok. English widely spoken. Safe and comfortable environment.”</p>	<p>“Low level of awareness and right now we are suffering from recession. Other weakness is the quality and competency of our industry personnel, i.e. guides, hotel staffs – we’ll have to upgrade their professionalism to higher level. Professionalism is one of our weakness.”</p>	<p>“Of course we need more qualified people to join. And turn the industry to professional standard. This is a big input for tourism: skilful and knowledgeable people.</p>	<p>“The recent terrorism activities and Malaysia associated with radical Muslims seems to be of a major threat to us.”</p>
R2	<p>“Our airport has the ability to take more frequencies: the slots. We have the air space. We can take three time more of what other airports in the region can take..... The airport has been designed to give space... Passengers after travelling in a tight aircraft environment would appreciate good breathing space.”</p>	<p>“ If we don’t work hand-in hand with the national airline. Any airport in the world, the airport is successful when the home airline is successful.”</p>	<p>“The opportunities that we have are the frequencies, slots and airspace. Seeing other airports reaching their maximum, their saturation, they will not be able to grow as fast and as high as us.”</p>	<p><i>Silent</i></p>
R3	<p>“To me is the natural resources. Facilities are almost the same in other destinations. We will have to promote the conservation of our natural resources.”</p>	<p>“The main weakness would be co-ordination amongst the industry players. Fragmentation still exists. NTO should take the co-ordinating role but this is not happening.... There is a lack of co-ordination amongst the states; as well as states and federal government.”</p>	<p>“It is stability at least for the coming years. The economic and political stability would be the major opportunity for the expansion of our industry.”</p>	<p>“ Destruction of the environment would be a major threat. If we do not control, especially industrialisation, that will be a major threat to the tourism industry. If there is a change in the government policy to move towards increasing industrialisation; to become a very industrialised country, then this will become a major threat to the tourism industry.”</p>
R4	<p>“Difficult to say.”</p>	<p>“Service. Thailand, the moment you step in, you know the service is so good. Architecture and the aura are so different that you know that you are in a</p>	<p><i>Silent</i></p>	<p>“ We are stuck in between two strong competitors: Singapore and Thailand. We have to differentiate. We have to be bold, loud and better.”</p>

		different country. Malaysia doesn't have that... So we are no different from other destinations. It is not unique."		
R5	The strength I think is that Malaysia is not well developed. Because it is not well developed, there are a lot of opportunities to develop it. But a lot of non-tourism infrastructure in Malaysia is not up to the mark..... There is no holistic approach in tourism. There is this gap between the key tourism locations, which is not attractive."	"I think in many ways it is probably an ambivalent image. People associate something with Malaysia but they don't associate any one thing in a really dominant way.... Malaysia. In many ways the marketing of Malaysia has stressed diversity and celebrated diversity.... But, the problem with celebrating diversity is that potential customer doesn't have a natural hook to hang their expectations on. That might be a challenge."	"There are a number of things which can be included in the tourism strategy planning. The sort of Eco type of environment might be one. The problem is, though you have these sort of products in East Malaysia, but as yet the real demand for this product is not so universal. I suppose it depends on what Malaysia wants for its tourism."	"There are a few potential threats. Is Malaysia a destination you would want to visit on a repeat basis. I think in terms of European, Australian and North American market, I think the whole issue of image and Malaysia being, perceived, as an Islamic destination becomes an issue.... I don't think it will affect the Chinese market."
R6	"Malaysia has very beautiful natural attraction: the islands, the beaches, the hill resorts, lush green tropical forest in Sabah and Sarawak. From my understanding, the Europeans like to see these natural attractions.	"I think promotion is lacking. If you compare with our competitor, Thailand is spending billions of dollars and actively promoting their country. Active promotion is lacking."	<i>Silent</i>	"To answer that we will have to look at the attractiveness of Malaysia. What is the major attraction that draws tourist to this country and how to protect it? For instance, historic/heritage site in Malacca was demolished. So what kind of effort can you put to protect it?.... So every attractive element has to be protected..... If you don't protect it, then you loose your tourist."
R7	"Historical links between Malaysia and the UK is strong and this is one of the main contributing factors. People seem to know where Malaysia is and some are also able to link that their friends or relatives were	"I don't see any weakness as such. Even when the tourist makes a trip to Singapore or Thailand, these people do extend their trips to Malaysia. This is	"Incentive group is a very lucrative group. We have a lot of big companies here which rewards their sales team annually based on their	"Being a Malaysian, we don't talk bad about the country even if there may be bad media coverage or what so ever. Besides unavoidable external

	<p>working or staying there.”</p>	<p>how we are trying to promote – especially for those who don't know Malaysia. We work in partnership with other NTOs. There are time we join in with the Thai tourist board for exhibitions – we share the same exhibition booth. We share the cost of the booth, and when people enquire about Thai, we are there as well.”</p>	<p>performance. We want to target these organisations. The company pays airfare, accommodation and all expenses for these incentive travellers. This is the group that we want and they bring in the money.”</p>	<p>threats like SARS and the Gulf war; I don't foresee any major threats.”</p>
<p>R8</p>	<p>“The UK people like relaxation and entertainment. That's why they like Penang. They go and relax at the beach and go to the city for nightlife. The image that catches their eyes is relaxing image. They are not too fond of Eco. When we show Orang Utan, they may perceive us as living on treetops for instance. It is difficult, because when we use beach we are in direct competition with Thailand, Hawaii.etc. Beach is the image that sells well. It is not us who decide on the image. We discuss with operators and agents and find out what client wants and what image sells well.”</p>	<p>“Flight connection appears to be our main weakness as compared to our competitors. We have only 21 flights as compared to the abundance of flights flying into Singapore and Thailand from their own airlines as well as other airlines(i.e. BA) “</p>	<p><i>silent</i></p>	<p><i>silent</i></p>



To begin with, the richness of the above information could not have been realised if a structured questionnaire approach has been adapted. But the price one has to pay to analyse the richness of this puzzling mystery is as equally challenging. Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* provides some insights into the philosophy of language. The following Wittgensteinian views and constructs are adapted to unravel the puzzling mystery of conversation addressed in this paper.

- i) a focus on ordinary language (C1)
- ii) meaning as use (C2)
- iii) the language game and context (C3)
- iv) function (C4)
- v) speech activities (C5)
- vi) the connection of language to life (C6)
- vii) the role of customs and rule governed activities (C7)
- viii) the indeterminacy of meaning (C8)
- ix) an antipathy to reductionism (C9)
- x) and a focus on moves in a game. (C10)

At this point there are two parts of this analysis that I would like to explain. Firstly, using the SWOT conversation as in table 1 above, I would attempt to apply the 10 constructs to illustrate the complexity of the language game. Secondly, the existing theme from the topic guide and the emergent themes from the interview would be scrutinised and discussed again applying the Wittgensteinian approach for discourse analysis.

R1 until R8 represents respondents 1 until 8 as explained earlier in the text. From the 8 different responses above, there are a few aspects of the language game that is prominent. Amongst which are when two interlocutors engage in a conversation, there is a tendency to drive the communication to the way one is more confident, comfortable and knowledgeable about. This will create and determine the rules and aims of the conversation as well as its boundaries and who the other players/actors are. To understand this language game, we shall now look at how the respondents fit into the 10 constructs of Wittgenstein.

My referral network (snowball sampling) identified respondent 1 (R1). The criteria were then to have someone who had the depth and breadth of knowledge in Malaysian Tourism. I was introduced to R1 who held a senior position in the Malaysian NTO and his experience was as long as the existence of the organisation. I'm placing importance on the background of the respondents to tie in to the first three constructs. The first three constructs are easier to understand when seen together than apart. Wittgenstein emphasis is on ordinary language (C1) as opposed to logic-based language. The reason behind that is utterances in normal conversation may be lost if the contextual meaning of a discourse is addressed through formal logic or the modelling of cognitive structures. Hence, Wittgenstein highlights that the use of ordinary language should reflect the influence of cultural and social factors on the use and interpretation of language across contexts. How cultural and social background influences the responses

is clearly visible from the issues on the weakness and opportunities. For instance, R1's seniority reflected boldness in responding on the weakness and threat issues on the Malaysian tourism industry as compared to R7 who is also from the NTO based in the UK but who is fairly new to the position. Differences of opinion are also visible on the issue of the tourism industry's strength when asked to an academician of a private university as compared to a public university. R3 from the public university responded positively as compared to R4 of the private university whose response was rather sceptical.

Wittgenstein's non-reductionism principles paves path to the following two constructs; meaning as use (C2) and the language game and context (C3). Meaning as use in Wittgenstein's context means the word that is uttered in a conversation should be interpreted according to the nature of the conversation and not solely on what a particular word means. That means, a same word may be interpreted differently in two different conversations. For instance, on understanding and interpreting the meaning of threat, respondent 2(R2) remained silent when asked about the threat. It could be due to several reasons. R2 representing the aviation industry would have chosen not to say much simply because the interview was carried out just after the September 11 incident. Or it could be simply because the respondent did not understand the word threat – which is most unlikely because the respondent spoke fluent English. To me the most acceptable reason is that the respondent viewed threat as an opportunity. Whenever asked of threat the reply was always on a positive note of seeing it as an opportunity.

Hence, if we really want to know of the threat from a person whose outlook is very positive, then we will have to ask questions like what are the areas could be strengthened or what opportunities would you want to embark on. So the emphasis here is again on the utterance in a conversation as opposed to the meaning of a single word. Therefore, the situation with R2 also points out construct 3 on the language game played and how important it is to look into a particular context in which it is being used at the time of utterance.

Moving on, construct 4 of Wittgenstein speaks of the function of language. Wittgenstein's concept of language reveals that language whether conversation or text has multiple function and purpose. Language should be seen beyond just conveying a thought. If we observe R1's statement on the weakness, pure linguistic interpretation would result in saying that the tourism industry's professionalism is lacking. Looking beyond a linguistic interpretation, for me, as researcher, that statement was helpful in identifying the importance of interviewing the skills and knowledge provider. This assisted me in filling in the gap and selecting the following respondent (theoretical sampling). Hence, the function of language was just not to identify the direct meaning of weakness but to pave path in identifying gaps to address the research in a holistic manner. Construct 4 has strong connection to speech activities (C5) and the connection of language to life (C6). For instance, the different function language played, resulted in identifying the following respondent. Hence, that function of activity resulted in me (the researcher) taking action (C5) in making arrangements to interview academics as

well as interviewing the selected respondent. This action or activity is part of how language is connected to life (C6). This actually reveals that the tourist alone as traditionally researched does merely not determine the formation of destination image. There is an entirety of actors/ players in the industry whose day-to-day living whom directly or indirectly through their action and decision making result in what destination image is. And this message is communicated through language, which is part of our lives (C6).

Construct 7(C7) speaks of the role of customs and rule-governed activities. Let's look at Respondent 5 for instance, whose background is a consultant, not a Malaysian, has got great knowledge of the Malaysian tourism industry. The respondent due to his consultant's nature was somehow bound to the customs and rule (C7) of consultation when asked of the weakness and threats. The respondent was rather positive and preferred to look at the threat and weaknesses as challenges that the Malaysian tourism industry has to face. On the other hand R7 representing the NTO, which is part of the civil service, appeared to be more cautious and supportive of all actions taken by the ministry in promoting Malaysia. Hence, the rule governed behaviour of the respondent due to culture and convention as described by Wittgenstein can be seen in the above scenario. However it is necessary to note that Wittgenstein also highlights that rules do not necessarily limit the kind of language-games played, for cultural customs do not encircle all aspects of behaviour - a person can follow a sign post only as long as the sign post exist. This is visible in the boldness of respondent 1, even though being part

of the civil service and answerable to the ministry. The respondent having been in the industry long enough and holding a senior position would have seen all rules, boundaries and 'sign posts' in the past. Hence he exercises more confidence in pointing out what is right and wrong without fear.

Every decoding is an encoding; this itself assist us to understand construct 8 - indeterminacy of language. This very decoding and interpretation that I'm writing can be treated as a new discourse, which can be decoded by another person. Wittgenstein goes to the extent of saying that meaning of a conversation may in fact be at times unrecoverable. Hence a discourse analysis should not be treated as highly scientific in the way precise sciences are scientific. As mentioned earlier, a discourse has its validity as long as it is explicated well.

The above situation of discourse explains construct 9 - antipathy to reductionism. A same discourse can be analysed and interpreted in different ways by different people or even the same person at different times. Thus, the interpretation has to be treated on a case-to-case and context-to-context basis. Hence, Wittgenstein's view on C9 clearly states that there can't be a unified theory to account for the diversity of linguistic life, and any attempt to do so will be futile.

The final construct is on moves in language games (C10). Just like in the game of chess, one can take on offensive, defensive and strategic moves. For instance, R3 and

R4 both from the private sector the former representing tour operations and aviation and the later representing the private academic institute took more of an offensive step to point out that the government should play a bigger role to bring Malaysian tourism to the forefront. On the other hand, R5 the consultant took a neutral and strategic stance as compared to R7 a civil servant representative who took a defensive mode when asked the same question. Hence, concluding the ten constructs of Wittgenstein. The following sections, using Wittgenstein's principles will discuss the rest of the analysis from a thematic angle.

### **6.2.3 Theme 1 - On Malaysia Truly Asia The Brand**

R1 agrees that Malaysia Truly Asia is a success story. R1 explains the reason being the five elements that were identified which made Malaysia look tempting. The five elements include culture (i.e “we have Kings today at the present day. People speak of their kings and castles of the past”), geography (accessible even to reach the most remote area), multiracial (having the different cultures and races without much trouble), English widely spoken and R1 could not recall the fifth element. R1 also added that from past experience when the people element is added on the promotional brand, there is a tendency for it to be successful. Hence, Malaysia Truly Asia carrying the people's element is seen to be successful by R1. R3's response was interesting in the sense that it was viewed from two angles; one from a tourist viewpoint and secondly being a local if the brand actually suits Malaysia today. From a tourist viewpoint, R3 agrees that it is an attractive brand due to the multi-ethnicity of Asia can be seen in Malaysia. R3 also

added that even in terms of physical resources, Malaysia could represent Asia. But from R3's personal viewpoint, the statement was "People have changed. The Malaysian have changed. Over the years modernisation makes people forget where they come from. People have changed." It is an interesting point made because this tag line though may be successful to promote Malaysia abroad may not be suitable for domestic tourism. R4 says this is the best tag line Malaysia has come up with so far. As R4 puts it: " Malaysia couldn't decide what image to project...the ministry recognises that diversity is our strength and they tend to play on that now. Which is better then them to bang on only a singular race". This reflects that people from the private sector and of different ethnic origin who normally scrutinises the government's action are actually in support of the governments' move. This is actually important for collaboration, networking and partnership if Malaysia is to rise as a powerful destination in the future. R6 agrees and supports that Malaysia truly Asia is a suitable brand but with a word of caution. This is what R6 had to say: "Malaysia is diverse and has many things. Truly Asia means you can go to one destination and see many things as opposed to going to many countries to get that experience. But, as a tourism promoter we must make sure that the information of what is available and in which area it is available is made known. People only have the message but not the content." This is a point to be noted because it goes back to the promotion and marketing strategies. One cannot just create initial interest and leave it without a proper follow-up. These are the issue that has to be made known to the policy makers and should be the benchmark to test whether tourist really understand the tag line Malaysia Truly Asia. R7 agrees completely with the tag line. R7 looks at Malaysia



as the melting pot of Asian culture and agrees that the diversity is reflected by the brand. But R8 though from the same organisation as R7 has a slightly different view. R7's response is similar to the concerns of R6. R8 agrees that the tag line is good but says that it doesn't conjure up for action. R8 addresses the concern that the follow up is not in place and one of the main reasons being insufficient funds for the follow up actions.

#### **6.2.4 Theme 2 - On Destination Image of Malaysia**

R1 spoke of the life cycle of an image. To begin with R1 uttered that one image would be insufficient. One image should not be stretched. Depending on the intensity of the campaign, if it has reached the people in a required time frame, and the mass wanted has been achieved, then according to R1, one should switch campaign; though R1 added on by saying that the campaign need not be entirely different from the previous, but innovative tactics has to be added on for a new campaign. R2 spoke of image form an aviation viewpoint. Airport is the entry point, hence, R2 say that the airport itself should have a strong image and admits that at present the Malaysian airport does not have a strong image as compared to its competitors. But added on by saying that they are working on it and steps have been taken to develop a logo. R3's view on image is as follows: " To me the promotion/publicity has to change. You can't depend on one type of an attraction. We have to look at the competitive advantage that we have at that time. If we look at when we promoted value for money, Thailand, Hong Kong and Singapore were doing the same thing. During that time, if we were to promote the cultural aspect,

we will lose out. We will have to look at the trend at what is available. For, Malaysia, you can't just have one image. Like Bali's case, Indonesia is not promoting Indonesia but just Bali." We can draw some insights from the above. One critical factor that has come out of the above is that destination images have so many similarities. One has to be innovative to get the strategic advantage. And the present day tourists have become more sophisticated in a sense that they are not travelling merely for the sake of taking a picture at Eiffel Tower. The innovation has to move one step further to the aura, the senses and the feeling of tourism promotion and experienced delivered which would give higher satisfaction in a tourist experience. Also a point to be noted is that the situation Malaysia is in and can't depend on a singular image. R4 on the other hand puts emphasis on one national image as many images simply for the reason that R4 feels that Malaysia is still fairly young in the tourism industry. The fear is that if we start promoting various images like Formula 1 circuit Sepang and Borneo Island instead of Malaysia, then Malaysia will never have an identity. On the contrary, R6 looking at a business point of view speaks of return on investment. According to R6 though ideally it should be Malaysia first before the sub-image, but if Malaysia doesn't sell then it is perfectly fine to use the sub-image like Borneo, Penang and Formula 1. According to R6 tourism is a business. And to businessmen profit counts. So the image that sells well if doesn't reflect the national identity, doesn't matter for a business. R5 had an interesting view on this subject matter. Not specifically on business against national identity. But speaks of the weight Malaysia may carry as compared to less popular states like Kedah. R5 adds another essential point on the Malaysian image: "One of the

challenges in Malaysia is that it doesn't have the depth and richness of history and culture. I think this is where the big gap is. The Thais capitalise on their cultural heritage. Even if tourists might not see the heritage component to gauge a destination image, but it is part of image. You expect more than just beaches." Two points can be seen from the above. First, how much Malaysia is emphasising on culture and heritage? People travel not only to see buildings and physical attractions, but to be part of the culture, heritage and history of the destination that they are visiting. It appears that not much are done. Looking back at the threats, R6 pointed out how cultural/heritage sites were demolished in the historical state of Malacca. Another interesting point that emerged though briefly is the mention of the immediate competitor; Thailand and how they have the competitive advantage on culture as compared to Malaysia. R7 agrees on image will have to change but only when the demand for an existing image diminishes. R7 added that images change but people don't forget. This is an important point to highlight that even when image is changed some continuity is required from past to present to future images. R8's response on image is based on the findings of Asia Pacific's Tourism Research (APTA). The research highlights the main reason people travel is for sun, sand and sea. But, when Malaysia projects their beaches, they come under direct competition with Thailand and Hawaii. R8 added that Malaysian image is not strong as the competing neighbouring countries: Singapore and Thailand. The reason given was that the Malaysian Tourism Ministry is fairly young. My first enquiry on this matter is on how reliable and valid is the research findings of APTA. Even if it is, is it applicable to the present scenario or was the findings published years

back. And my second concern is that how long are we to say that our experience is still at an infancy stage. This prompts the question if the government policies are for tourism and if they are, how much emphasis is given as compared to our competitors. When asked on how to make Malaysian image stronger, this is what R8 had to say: “Our funding is limited and if we want to get the major travel agents and tour operators on our side we will have to invest more money. Another issue is that since Malaysia is predominantly Muslims, with recent rise in terrorism, we are linked with this current issue even though it may not be true. For instance the media will immediately paint a negative image. So, the bottom line is money, so if we are willing to pump in more money like what Dubai is doing, then we definitely will have a more positive image.”

The learning point from the above is that firstly, money matters. And for this to be for tourism favour we will have to look into the policies and politics of the country. How much of the national budget allocation is the government willing to pump in to the tourism sector. Beside the question how much, what will actually trigger the government to invest more into tourism is another interesting aspect to look into. There is always finger pointing between the government and private sector in these tourism matters; one pointing at the other to create more demand. Second point that was raised is the rise of terrorism and how quickly negative image can be painted upon a nation simply because majority of the population are Muslims. But the challenge here is on how to portray a neutral image if not positive.

### **6.2.5 Theme 3 - On Competition**

R1 says that competition should be compared only on a homogenous basis. R1 went on to say that none of the tourism products are or can be homogenous. But just for the sake of comparison, R1 compared beach to beach. Langkawi (Malaysia) to Koh Sa Mui (Thailand). The conclusion R1 made was that Malaysia had an uphill task in terms of accessibility and creating awareness to position ourselves. And as for Langkawi it doesn't have the local population to cater for the demand created for it. And when this happens there is a tendency of the locals behaving like tourists themselves. Hence, loosing the cultural attractiveness snowballs to the destination loosing its charm, hence becomes less attractive to tourist. R2 and R6 representing the aviation raised the competition Malaysian has to face against Singapore and Thailand. Both on the same note said that for the airport to perform well, the national airline will also have to perform well. At the moment Malaysian Airlines are not as good as Thai and Singapore Airlines. When the national airline doesn't have good understanding with other airline of the world, then the flight frequency and volume into Malaysia will be affected. So, naturally Singapore and Thailand will definitely pinch away the tourist from Malaysia. R4 looks at Singapore and Thailand as Malaysia's main competitor. When compared to Singapore, R4 concludes that Malaysia although with abundance of resources are less innovative, while Singapore with their limited resources are able to develop like Feng Shui tour for instance. As for Thailand, R4 points out that service are their strong point. To add on to service the whole ambience and aura of stepping into Thailand provides a

tourist that he or she is actually away from home into a different country, culture and environment. If we look at Malaysia, we are not different than other destination, hence not unique.

#### **6.2.6 Theme 4 - On State versus Federal Matters**

Malaysia, geographically divided by the South China Sea as to West and East Malaysia is further divided into states and territories for administration and historical reasons. Malaysia as a whole consists of thirteen states and three regions (Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan). The three regions known as the Federal Territory is under the direct observation of the Federal Government. Of the thirteen states, nine have royalties (known as Sultan - "King of the State") still in-charge and the remaining four have Governors representing. Malaysia's unique policy, allows each Sultan to be the King of the country on a rotation (a five year term) basis. The position of King, Sultans and Governors are more as figure-heads and not so much on the administrative front of either states or the country. The country's administration is spearheaded by a Prime Minister and his cabinet members while the state administration is run by Chief Ministers and their respective executive council members. The above introduction is required to show the complexity of the Malaysian nation which contributes to decision making on all matters and for our context - tourism matters. Although the federal government is stronger in many ways, the states own the land. Therefore, when it comes to land-use matters the states have a say in it. With the above brief background in mind, let's see what the respondents have to say on how these matters affect the

tourism industry of Malaysia and namely in forming a destination image for the nation. R1 highlights that all states have their own tourism body today. For instance, the Penang state is very active in their own tourism promotional activities as well as development. R1 believes that the role represented by the states is necessary for the development function. Simply because, in Malaysia the land use is within the power of a state. The federal government has no authority over the use of land in a state. So, anything that has to be built, if the state approves it will be built. Even if the federal government disagrees state will go ahead and proceed. Thus, for the development part, the state will have to come in mainly for the maintenance of facilities, keeping attractions clean, adding on other amenities. On another note, R1 highlights the communication hiccups between federal and state. For instance, when the states goes abroad promoting on their own. This has two major impacts, first the relationship between the countries that host these promotions. Usually for national level promotions, the host will allocate a space/booth for the countries representing. Just imagine if each and every state in Malaysia requesting for their own booth for such exhibitions instead of going under the umbrella of Malaysia. Hence, resources are utilised ineffectively, simply because it may put off the visitors to the exhibition. The other drawback when states promote themselves and not as part of Malaysia is the impact on Malaysian destination image. Tourist will be familiar with Borneo, Penang and Mallacca but they wouldn't realise that they've actually visited the country Malaysia. To certain extent tourist even think that Malaysia is in Penang and not the other way around. R1 added on by saying that effort is made to create awareness of the

importance of going together and not by their own brand names which affects the Malaysian identity. Here the question is of national identity, return on investment, short-term versus long-term thinking. For the purpose of national image, it would be helpful if the states co-operate. But then, there is an element of business in these tourism investments. And for business investors, it is how much return on investment that they get which is of importance as compared to national identity. But, one thing that has to be realised is that, the industry requires healthy competition and success is gained when worked in network and partnership as compared to solo riders. R3's comment on this issue was rather interesting due to the respondents' neutral stance of neither pro federal nor state. R3 says that our country is small and every part of the country is easily accessible. If we want MTPB (the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board) as the only agency to promote every destination, I don't think MTPB will be able to handle it. So, it is still all right for each destination/state to go out and promote itself. But, they have to make sure that they indicate the destination/state belongs to Malaysia. And not just Sarawak/Sabah or Penang on it's own. R3 added by saying that MTPB should only be the co-ordinator and highlighted that MTPB does not promote Malaysia as a whole. Instead, MTPB is only promoting certain destination, for instance Taman Negara (National Park) which falls under the jurisdiction of Wildlife and National Park Management (PERHILITAN) who does not have the means to promote themselves. Unlike PERHILITAN, the state don't have to depend on MTPB. The states have their own resources and the Executive Council (EXCO) for tourism of each states also includes promotions as one of their tourism functions. On the impact of national



image/identity, R3 uttered that a holistic Malaysian Tourism image is not crucial. The example of Thailand was given. Thailand does not promote the whole country. They are promoting Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket. In Thailand, the responsibilities of promoting these places are given to the Thai Promotion Board. In our case, it is different; MTPB needs to promote the destinations that the states are unable to promote. The National Parks and Marine Parks are example of attractions that MTPB promotes. R4 on the other hand feels that Malaysia is still young in the tourism business. Therefore, R4's suggestion is to promote Malaysia as a nation, which means highlighting Malaysia first before highlighting activities and destinations. R4 says there's no point to have an expensive F1 circuit and people don't know that it is in Malaysia. The Malaysian part has to be emphasised first and progress is evident. For instance the effort of visit Malaysia campaign on the double-decker buses in London was a good strategy and a great success. London being a cosmopolitan city, draws people from all over the world, hence such effort definitely appears to be effective and was copied by Singapore. R5 acknowledges the tension between the state and the federal. There is a problem of identity. The states of Malaysia as compared to Australia are much smaller physically. They don't have strength of identity. One of the things with the Australian states is that, they all have a very visible well-known capital city for example. Now, urban Malaysia with the possible exception of Kuala Lumpur, Penang and to lesser extent Malacca is unknown. Even with people who are reasonably familiar with Malaysia will have problem identifying urban cities in Malaysia beyond that sort of list. Therefore, R5 feels that the states should not take the lead to spearhead

destination promotion. The identity of Malaysia as a whole is more useful. If you start to blast Kedah around the world, it will be a problem. One of the challenges in Malaysia is that it doesn't have depth and richness of history and culture. I think this is where the big gap is. The Thais capitalise on their cultural heritage. You expect more than just beaches. R6's comments were rather short and straight forward. According to R6 it is fine to promote state even if the country's image is hidden in the initial stage. R6 says that it is easier to promote what people are familiar with; hence it is fine to promote Borneo and not Sabah and Sarawak initially. R6 added on by saying that it should not be just left at the point of familiarity, but effort should be put to create awareness by saying that Sabah and Sarawak, which are the eastern states of Malaysia, forms the Borneo Island. By doing this, nothing is lost. People know of Borneo, so people visit Borneo and it is good for the business and economy. When we get more people, we can create awareness and educate more people that this destination is actually in Malaysia. This is a sort of win-win situation without really bothering who is superior. R7's response shows a positive partnership balance between the state and federal. R7 agrees that the objective of MTPB is to promote Malaysia as a country. But if, every state feels that they want to promote more apart from what MTPB is doing, than they are free to do it. Because they have the budget; they have the people; so, why not? MTPB does not restrict the states. Usually the state work along with MTPB. For instance, if the states plan to promote in the UK, they will contact MTPB London first and MTPB assists the states to organise their activities. Therefore there isn't anything conflicting between the federal and the states.

### **6.2.7 Theme 5 - On Policies and Leadership**

Themes 4 and 5 are closely related. The differences between state and federal administration is directly or indirectly due to the snowball effect of policies in place, the leadership that is implementing and forming policies and how well the state and federal form their partnerships. R1 when asked on policies immediately spoke of the leadership in tourism. A close look at the people who are placed in the organisation in leadership position reveals that there is a conflict between organisational management skills against industry knowledge (specialist skills). It is not properly matched. It is like management workshop conducted by senior engineers or hospital run by specialists. Specialist should be working on the patient not the pay slip and the salary of staff. Similar situation in MTPB. The same people handle administration and marketing. People skilful in management handling marketing and skilful marketers handling management becomes the case. And whatever policies comes out from these people and a lot more should be done here. R1's suggestion to improve the situation is right people, right qualification in the right place. Should be more stress in qualification. Another factor which is not helping is the government rotation policy of civil servants. Though it is justified and good in many ways, it is not helping in terms of skills and knowledge specific to the industry. We have public service officers coming from different departments. In the last 15 years, in every section, more than 5 people have passed. The industry specific seminars and training attended all gone to waste. This management policy in the past 30 years has seen more than 10 Director Generals walk

in and out of the tourism ministry. None of them came to the industry after knowing the industry well and none of them stayed after learning about the industry. In 4-5 years they move. This neither happens to Thailand nor Indonesia. They have had the same leader. Singapore follows our style but their task is easier because Singapore Airlines maintains the duty of tourism promotion world-wide. So whether Singapore tourism board promotes or not the Singapore Airlines will carry their tourism flag. So Singapore's footing is solid. Singapore has people changing all the time on the top, every five years but without worries. R3 highlighted that the government is aware for the need of people who are trained in the tourism sector. This is reflected through the number of hospitality/tourism/recreation programmes formed and offered at university level. R3 added on by saying whether it is at the beginning stage, or up and running, all the public universities have already embarked on their tourism curriculum. R3 also highlighted of the governments commitment towards the tourism industry. One of the government commitments will be the budget allocation. If we compare the previous Malaysian Plan compared to the present Malaysian plan, the allocation has doubled. On a more personal account, R3 sees positive improvement politically and economically in the future and foresees stability as compared to other countries within ASEAN. R3 added that there are sufficient policies and laws but the problem arises when it come to co-ordination. The federal has its own policies and laws and so does the states especially when it come to the land-use matter. State fears, that if federal assistance is requested, then the state will loose it's right over the land. But this is not the issue. For instance, it doesn't say in the constitution of National Park that the federal must own

the land. Therefore the land can still belong to the state while the federal manages it. So as long as a balanced partnership is reached there should be no fear between state and federal because all the policies and laws are in place. R4 feels that active involvement from the government is still lacking though the policies may be in place. In short, it is the implementation that counts. R4 says that the government should keep control. For instance, if it is a heritage building, its originality will have to be maintained. Last year in Malacca, a pre-war building was brought down. No one seems to be bothered or no one seems to know anything about it. In Malaysia, we should come up with heritage list. Like in the UK, there is a heritage Trust, which monitors and takes care of anything related to historic/heritage. R5 draws parallel of the Malaysian tourism ministry from the British system of rotating professional civil servants. Where somebody moves from agriculture to industry of commerce to tourism and then on to somewhere else. There are certain benefits in policy areas provided there is a strong professional cadre either within the ministry or the tourists board to support at the professional level. R5 says “my sense of the MTPB is that the professional knowledge within the board is reasonably good. The civil servants are there more to guide and direct overall policies and are not expected to get involved in the nitty-gritty.” Nevertheless, R5 added that the lack of professional knowledge may be true at state level. R5 also spoke of leadership, patriotism and self-confidence and how sensitive these issues could be. When speaking of how the heritage/historic part is wiped away to replace with local road names for instance as opposed to its colonial past, R5 says this is an issue of low self-confidence rather than high patriotism. R5 says “if you have the confidence to

accept what has happened in the past, you don't worry about that sort of things. The Irish went through that sort of thing. They changed all their names. They got rid of the Anglo past. It is taking a long time to work through that. I think, as long as you only see your colonial heritage as in negative terms, you've got a lot of problems. It's not the matter of negative or positive; it is reality. And the modern Malaysia is the way it is partly because of that." But again this is a sensitive issue, which can be addressed marginally. R6 clearly identifies the role of politicians and civil servants. Politicians should run the country. There is another layer after the politicians - who are the civil servants. This people are experts in their area. Politicians will come and go, but these civil servants stay. And these civil servants are the one who contribute in policy making. So these civil servants who are the administrators of the country, at least theoretically should know what is best for the country and the industry. It should not come to a point, that just because a politician says so, a natural area should be turned into an industrial site.

### **6.2.8 Theme 6 - On Terrorism and Fundamentalism**

Terrorism is not new. It happens day in day out between India and Pakistan, Israel and Palestine and between other lesser known or popular countries. Nevertheless September 11 somewhat has brought terrorism to the global front and has an adverse effect on travel, tourism and destination image of a country. Unfortunately though Malaysia is not an Islamic country, but due to the official religion being Islam and the majority population are Muslims somehow to some people it is seen as an extremist Islamic

country, and this situation definitely has not helped in creating a favourable image for Malaysia. R1's comments on terrorism were based on negative publicity and crisis management actions taken to alter the situation. R1 agrees that it is bad publicity and not favourable for a destination's image. R1 also adds that one should not take immediate action to turn around and say it is not right; because this may trigger curiosity amongst people who may think that there may be truth in it because of the protective nature. So instead of declaring Malaysia is a safe country to visit, it is said that our day-to-day living is normal and going on fine. From the government's side, publicity will be given that security measures has been stepped up, our internal security act in place - even if suspicious characters are in the country police surveillance will be able to take action. On the other hand when travel agents are concerned, MTPB will speak to them and explain the actual situation. The partnership with the Malaysian Airlines (MAS) has also helped Malaysian Tourism on this cause. MAS have agreed to bring in foreign representatives (travel agents, media representatives, tour operators, travel writers, etc.) into the country to get a hands on feel of the actual environment in Malaysia. This is a 'MEGAFAM' programme for the past two years. On average we bring in 300-500 people every month from different part of the world. Basically, this is a reassuring measure to the client of the actual situation in Malaysia. R1 added on by saying that people's memory are short, the Sept 11 caused decrease in tourist arrival for the first six months after the incident. Then the cycle picked up and back to normal. So, even for an extreme crisis, give six months and things should be back to normal. Speaking of religious matter has always been a sensitive issue. Nevertheless, this is a

subject can't be ignored since it has direct implication on the image projected by a destination. For instance, the east coast states; Kelantan and Terengganu of the Peninsula Malaysia have long sandy unspoilt beaches and islands (Pulau Perhentian, Pulau Redang) which attract a large number of tourists. These two states mentioned above were under the governance of a fundamental Islamic party who even came up with dress codes for tourists. By the way, in the recent election held (March 2004), the state of Terengganu has been captured back by the secular party which is the ruling party of the country but the state of Kelantan still remain under the governance of the Islamic party. This issue was raised during the interview session with R3 and this is what R3 said: "Of course we can't deny that there will be some impact on the destination image. If you look at it, the imposition of this Islamic law is a political show-off. If you go to Kelantan, they are still selling beers. Of course the ladies are not allowed to put on their bikinis and walk in the streets.....Even in Europe, there are people who prefer some moderation. Even these two east coast states will not go to the extreme in terms of Islamic law. To me this is more political. Realising the imposition of strict laws will hamper their tourist industry, I'm not very worried that they will go to that extent. Unless there is a total change in the Malaysian political system, I don't foresee the Islamic party running the Malaysian government. I don't see the possibility at all." R4's concern on fundamentalism is the negative image that would be projected. R4's rational is that , when a negative image is projected, it will not be of a specific state, but the media will make the best of it to bring the image of the whole country down. R4 added on by saying that the fundamental group are very selfish imposing



fundamental laws knowing that the Malaysian society is a multi-ethnic society. On another note, R4 had full of praise for the former Prime Minister (Dr. Mahathir Muhammad; Dr. Mahathir stepped down in 2003 October and the premier's post has been filled by Abdullah Badawi since then) in handling the terrorism issue. R4 pointed out the efforts the former prime minister initiated to restore positive image of Malaysia to the globe. Some of the activities mentioned are in the form of organising international conferences, meetings, bringing in foreign media and taking them to the places of attraction and showing the day to day living in Malaysia is fine. R5 acknowledges the fundamental practices as a threat to Malaysia's destination image as some western/European market may perceive Malaysia as an Islamic country. R5 added on by saying that R5 does not foresee Malaysia being swept away by the fundamentalist. R6's comments on the fundamentalist issues shared the same sentiment as the previous respondents on creating an unfavourable image for the destination. R6 added on to say that this deterrence may not be wide spreading. It may seem that some of the regulations imposed not practical, and become more flexible in the future. R6 explains that unfavourable actions are implemented when one does not have the right understanding. But when the actions fail, then the policies will have to be revised. R6, similar to the previous respondents does not foresee the fundamental party taking over and running the government in the future.

### **6.2.9 Theme 7 - On Privatisation and Specialisation**

The tourism industry is an amalgamation of sectors such as hotel (accommodation), food and beverage, transportation, financial services, etc. to name a few. This fact that we are aware of requires collaboration, partnership and networking if a favourable image for a destination is to be created. To address these complex matters countries have formed tourism ministries and national tourism organisations knowing that the tourism industry can be one of the countries main source of economy. Malaysia is amongst the nations that recognise the growth and potential of the tourism industry and this is reflected through the formation of the Tourism Ministry that overlooks the planning and development of the industry and the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) that acts as the marketing and promotion component. And more recently (April 2004) under the administration of Malaysia's new premier (Abdullah Badawi), a new portfolio in the form of ministry has been introduced. What used to be the Ministry of Culture , Arts and Tourism has now been segmented to two Ministries; 1) Ministry of Tourism and 2) Ministry of Heritage and Culture. This point of specialisation and privatisation is what cropped up during the interview session amongst the respondent. The respondents discussed on their views on the need of a privatised organisation to act as a central body, which acts to collaborate, create partnership, and establish networks amongst the various industry players. The issue of privatisation was raised to improve efficiency as we could see later on from the respondents' view that neither the Tourism Ministry nor the MTPB have actually been able to successfully perform the task of

collaborating and communicating amongst the industry players. On the specialisation angle, probably the government realises that to have one ministry to overlook all the issue in tourism may not be possible. Hence, the specialisation effort and the introduction of Ministry of Heritage and Culture is timely since one of the weaker images that Malaysia as a nation has to tackle and promote is the heritage and culture component. Although the implementation of this specialisation is very recent, it is interesting on how the respondents actually spoke of these issues about a year ago. And I will like to highlight here that this theme actually emerged from the interviews and was not one of the predetermined subject of conversation as in the topic guide. R1's response when asked if MTPB should be privatised is as follows: " MTPB have thought about this. It will work. But it also means we will have to rinse hard and start hard. Now, we have procedures, which keep 6-7 people doing the same thing. Passing papers around. If privatised one person should suffice. Here the more people you pass to, the more difficult to detect the mistake. Everyone has seen it. So, there can't be a mistake. It can be commercially run and there is a commercial angle that MTPB can take. After being in the business for 30 years, we develop creative and media through advertisement agencies. Some of these agencies are so small, so inexperienced, that the input they get is from MTPB itself. What is there to stop us in hiring the best creative director in MTPB, and develop all the creative; use MTPB's network world wide to buy the media. If MTPB buys the media by itself, MTPB gets to keep the commission and more important than the commission is the goodwill with the media. But now the goodwill goes to the agency that would use this goodwill to earn account for other

buyers on MTPB's expense. R1 added on to say that if the end result reduces the cost of promotion and increases effectiveness, the government today would be supportive of privatisation. R3 agrees that networking and partnership amongst the industry players has to be enhanced and at the moment is not happening. R3, though did not make any direct statements on privatisation, but indicated an agency is required to pull these industry players together. This agency should come up with the right mechanism in place to enhance the collaboration of the industry players. R3 added on to say that at present, R3's institution is working on tourism database management. And the database management system for the industry is to provide and collect information to and from the industry players. The one challenge that R3 highlighted is on how to provide necessary facilities to make these information accessible. R4 welcomed the idea if MTPB were to be privatised. R4 says that MTPB works better than the other government offices. For instance, when a phone call is made, someone will be there to attend to your needs. Privatisation will definitely enhance the performance of MTPB. It will change the mindset. On a quick note on segmentation, R4 did emphasise on the need of a heritage trust similar to the one in the UK to maintain, promote and enrich the heritage component of the Malaysian image. R5 acknowledges the need to have a body/an agency, which does collaboration, networking, setting standards for tourism service delivery but also states that it should not be the function of MTPB. From R5's experience, there has never been a public sector driver in tourism to address the human resources, training and networking needs. R5 adds that it will be a great challenge especially in the developing tourism economy for the government to take the lead and

provide the support and infrastructure for human resources development. R5 says a specialist agency is required to take on this role. The closest such model suggested by R5 is the tourism training and education agency in Ireland, which has been in business for around 40 years. Their function has been from training to short courses to the industry, recruiting school leavers into formal college programmes, providing short-term training, providing some qualifications, formulating curriculum, etc. It is a very integrated role advising government on training policies. And this establishment is a government-funded agency. R3 and R5 response on privatisation and specialisation actually yields to another angle of discussion that is the issue of education, training and professionalism which I will address in the following theme. But before that, R6 suggestion on creating specialist areas by theme within the tourism board/ministry paves way for better efficiency. This is what R6 had to say: “Specialist activities are actually good. You can have a matrix style. On one side, have what types of destinations are available. And on the other side, have the types of activities offered. This will create richness in information. If the tourist is interested in activity based, he/she can run through the activities available. End of the day, it boils down to how much resources the tourist board wants to commit. If you have enough money to pump in, you will be successful.”

### **6.2.10 Theme 8 - On Education and Professionalism**

The issues raised in the previous theme have close relations to the education and professionalism component of the tourism industry. Privatisation and segmentation may improve efficiency, provided the resources are adequate. Physical resources can be bought, fixed and purchased as long as there is sound financial backing. But the human resources factor seems to be more important in the tourism business. The right person, at the right place, doing the right thing with the right attitude and professionalism is required. This human capital, knowledge base and professionalism, money alone can't buy. It requires training and education. R1 speaks of MTPB's relationship with the academic world and MTPB's idea in creating standards and professionalism through an academy. R1 expresses that somehow the involvement with academics has not tied in yet. R1 would like to see academics sitting in a tourist board meeting as an observer, study and give feedback in the initial stages and once the system understood even participate in the decision making process. R1 also speaks of cross-pollination. For instance, MTPB staffs goes through an internship in the academic institution and vice-versa; an academic comes to MTPB for an internship. R1 added on by saying that the senior pool of staffs from MTPB should pursue their Master's and PhD degrees. On another note R1 spoke of MTPB having a tourism academy for the purpose of , for instance training certified guides, coach drivers, tour operators, etc. At the moment, the tourism and hospitality industry doesn't have a central body certifying people at different skills level. Suppose F & B personnel were to leave an organisation, he/she

would not have certifying evidence that this is the skill level that has been acquired. For instance if the staff is from a signature hotel's F & B outlet, he/she would say for instance, I'm from the Holiday Inn chain. So the staffs' capability is measured from where previous experience lies. The academy on the other hand will play a protecting role. It would have certain standards, what income one should get with the qualification acquired. These measures, according to R1 will pave way for professionalism practice in the tourism industry. R1 added by saying that the function and role of the academy will allow integration amongst academicians, professionals, industry players and the government; through regular seminars, training and discussions that can be carried out, hence having on the job issues solved. The other benefit will also be in creating a larger database. When asked if this academy concept can become a reality, R1 with some element of disappointment replied that the thought has been put forward to a secretary general who was keen. Due to the rotation system the person in charge went on to another position, consequently the academy element is totally disregarded today. Some how it appears that academic is seen as tourism industry's enemy and today the tourism industry is one industry with least number of intellectuals. For instance, the case of Malaysian Airlines (MAS); to begin with not many has tertiary education. On top of that, those with engineering background who is suppose to work on aircraft maintenance are now appointed as station manager doing sales, promotion and marketing jobs. This is a total misfit and we are talking about the national airlines. Now, back to the realisation of the tourism academy, R1 says that it boils down to the leadership and at present does not appear to be academic friendly. R2's response to the

issue of education and professionalism is very hands-on and this is what R2 had to say:

“ I think people have a lot of information but do not want to share. It is just not the academicians but this is the hindrance for the whole country. If you know that you’re changing your views; for instance what tourism did was to change their focus from European market to other countries. If we were informed of these changes earlier, then more negotiation of the airline of that particular destination can be organised. Malaysian sometimes like to do things on an ad hoc basis. This is a culture that we live with but personally I feel this situation will change to be better. For instance, tourism is much bolder now. They come forward and inform us of what their plans are. The culture of sharing matters for instance between the marketing department of tourism and the marketing department of the airport management should be enhanced. At present we do have collaborative committee but is more on policy matters. But, this collaboration and network should go across functional units as well. In short, things are looking better and I hope there will be more collaboration in the future.” R3 spoke of the tourism education offered by the public institution as compared to the private institution. R3 says that the majority of private higher institutions are providing skills training. The only public university offering skills training and awarding a diploma is UiTM. But the scope of the other public universities is to produce graduates who would be able to enter the industry at supervisory level and above. R3 added that the public universities are looking at more of a managerial and decision-makers level. When probed, how marketable will these graduates be without skills training, R3 responded that the programme offered by R3’s institution requires practical training which may



not be comparable to the rank and file experience. Anyhow, a minimum of six months training is required through students placement in various tourism related agencies. When asked if the practical training alone suffices without introducing the skills training into the curriculum, R3 to some extent agrees it may not be sufficient, saying that what the institution is providing is the basic requirement and the student will be encouraged to gain more practical experience through part-time job during their break. R3 compared the skills and managerial workers. From R3's assessment, today what is lacking in the Malaysian tourism industry is the managerial group and not the skills group. As for the skills worker, the private institutions are providing them. In terms of management capability, if a person has come through rank and file they will definitely have a better knowledge of the industry. But again, skills alone is not sufficient, the management training of the business has to be incorporated. R3 says that the skill workers will not have adequate management education. On a different note, R3 looking at the long-term of the tourism industry says that there will not be a surplus of graduates. R3's rationale is that the tourism component as per in community tourism, eco-tourism, etc. will grow in the future and all these components would require managers. R3 also spoke of the research component in tourism. R3's views are that research in policy and development area is still lacking. Most research activities carried out has been basic research. One of the issues in research highlighted is in having a database and managing it. Though data is plenty the management of it is somewhat not in place. Hence, R3 summarised, in order for sound policy and planning research to be carried out, the issue of database management has to be resolved first. From a senior

person's (R3) view in the public institution, it is interesting to hear what R4 (academician of a private institution but has served as a lecturer in a public institution prior to joining R4's present job) has to say. R4 thinks that the public university's programme is not specified to the industry, what the public university wants is to create managers, whereas the private institutions create students who are skilled based. R4 says due to the competitive nature of the private institutions, the best skills training, i.e. front office training, have to be given so that the students who graduate can start work from day one. The employers would not want to waste their resources on training or retraining. R4 adds that the public universities are more academic oriented may be with the exception of UiTM who offers industrial skills. R5 who has a fair understanding of the Malaysian scenario and who is aware of the sudden surge in tourism education in Malaysia points out some of the challenges both the private and public institution may face. As R5 puts it, the cheap way of teaching tourism is in the classroom environment; getting a large number of students studying the theoretical aspects of tourism. The drawback is that the industries will not response to this positively. Though R5 says the vocation outcome may not be the only way to teach tourism, but R5 believes that it is essential to build the blocks from bottom up. R5 recognises that funding can be an issue for the public universities to offer practical facilities. Nevertheless, R5 also adds the route the public universities have taken to tackle this issue has not seen much success. R5 weighing the pros and cons, actually highlighted the strength of the programme run by the public universities. R5's rationale is that they may be a danger in saturating the programme with too many practical subjects. Especially for young people who want to

progress further, the subjects may not be transferable Hence, the generic nature of the programme offered is valuable because it creates choices rather than being side tracked. On the research note, R5 acknowledges the issue of interaction between academicians and industry practitioners. R5 describes the issue as the fault of both parties. Practitioners not showing enthusiasm and interest in research and academics are not energetic enough to approach the industry. One good way to enhance these interactions is through seminars, workshops and conferences add R5. As in describing the research culture in Malaysia, R5 points out that the initial stage of a researcher appears to be energetic and productive, but once certain position is attained there is a tendency to just lay back and enjoy the prestige that comes with it. On the other hand, R6 a practitioner brings out interesting insights in relations to academics and tourism. Firstly, R6 encourages academicians' participation simply because R6 recognises the importance of research in addressing a problem. R6 says that researchers are creative and have the ability to understand the issue behind a problem. R6 adds, very often practitioners end up identifying just the symptoms and not the root to the problem itself. But, unfortunately, R5 says this is not happening in the Malaysian tourism scenario. R5 truly hopes that more interaction between industry and academics takes place in the future so that the professionalism of the tourism industry in Malaysia develops to a higher platform.

### **6.2.11 Theme 9 - On Strategies for Malaysia to be a successful destination**

Drawing and summarising from all the respondents, for Malaysia to be a successful destination, the following steps can be adapted;

- focus on continued enhancement of service and quality
- involve in wider range of agencies - some don't see themselves as part of tourism i.e. transport . hence collaboration, partnership and communication effort has to be made
- address the issue of image, though Malaysia does not have a negative image , the present image appears to be weak.
- collaboration amongst the actors/players, in short the agencies involved in governing tourism must be enhanced

### **6.3 Knowledge Interest.**

The purpose of this exercise is theory building. This was being able to achieve namely due to the nature of in-depth interview and Wittgenstein's discourse analysis. The outcome of this study should be viewed as a part of the PhD process. In the actual completion of the PhD this would act as one of the methodologies in the triangulation made to illustrate the validity of the work. My concluding remark is to reiterate that destination image should not solely be viewed from a tourist perspective alone or to use just a particular approach just because it has been previously done so. There must be flexibility in using various philosophies, paradigms and methods to find the actual fact.

Hence, this piece of research is actually an attempt to illustrate that to understand destination image one can also take a new path as compared to the traditional survey based questionnaire method.

## CHAPTER 7

### DESTINATION IMAGERY AND MARKETING MEDIA

"We seem as a species to be driven by a desire to make meanings: above all, we are surely *Homo significans* - meaning-makers. Distinctively, we make meanings through our creation and interpretation of 'signs'." (Chandler, D., 1994)

#### 7.1 Introduction

In line with the main aim of this thesis, this chapter strives to understand the meaning of tourism destination image from a media angle. Ideally, an assessment of various modes of media inclusive the print (dossiers, brochures, newspapers, magazines) and electronic (television, the World Wide Web, radio) would have been comprehensive and preferred. Pragmatic consideration such as the time and resources available within the time frame of a PhD process and the most accessible and favoured media by the tourist was thought through before deciding on just concentrating the study on the tourism promotional dossiers. Both textual and visual images are scrutinised in this chapter-using semiotics (semiology); which is a means to study the systems of signs. Within the semiotic analysis, the study also incorporates a basic element of content analysis in order to develop and compare the various themes that have emerged from the assessment of the dossiers. Drawing from themes emerging from the content analysis, a completion of the semiotic analysis of both textual and visual content of the dossiers is possible. Based upon the design principles and data elicitation technique as

outlined in chapter 4, the analysis and findings of the textual and visual images of the dossiers are discussed below.

## **7.2 Data analysis and findings**

Drawing from the design principles and utilising the data obtained from the previous sections, the semiotic process as suggested by (Echtner, 1999) is applied in this analysis section. The semiotic process suggested by Echtner consists of the following components:

- Selection of a synchronic closed corpus data.
- Specification, segmentation and inventory of relevant elements of analysis
- Syntagmatic-Paradigmatic examination of the elements
- Creating taxonomy of elements to understand the system of ‘rules’ by which these elements are combined.
- Penetrate surface meaning (denotative) and extract underlying meanings (connotative)

### **7.2.1 Selection of synchronic closed corpus data**

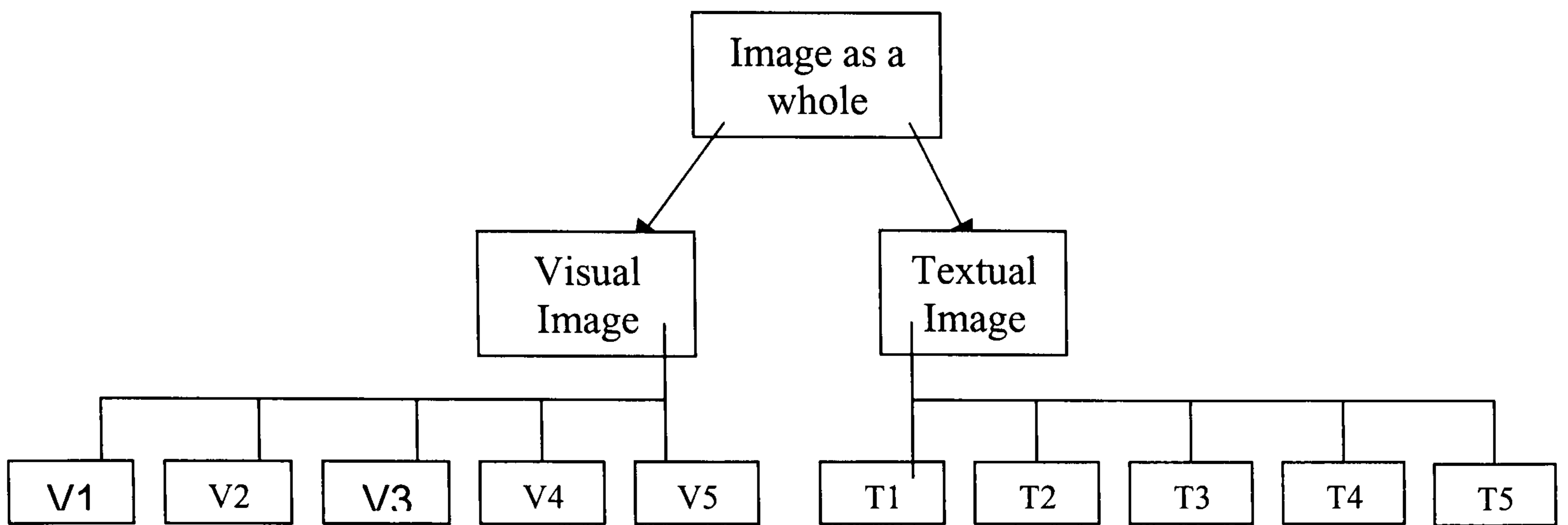
The data obtained from the elicitation process comprised of dossiers, which included not only Malaysia, but also depending on the theme the tour operator or travel agent wished to position and promote their business as. For instance, if the dossier was an adventure theme, then, those destinations that portrayed elements of adventure was highlighted. Similarly for themes such as beach, tropical or nature, the relevant

destinations based upon these themes were highlighted. For the scope of this study, data has to be specifically selected and isolated to meet the underlying purpose of this study. And to recap, the purpose is to look at the structure of meaning of what Malaysia resembled from a British context. Therefore, the defined data set for this study will be of those dossiers that consisted of Malaysia, both textually and visually, as the subject. Having drawn the boundary, a synchronic perspective (Saussure, 1966) to operationalise the study was required. Saussure's meaning of synchronised data set is that the data set is viewed as static, distinct and a self-sufficient system that focuses on the current structure and not historical context. Thus, for synchronising purpose, the data set of the Malaysian (self-sufficient system) subject that will be used for the analysis is from the dossier of the 2003/2004 (current structure) seasons.

### **7.2.2 Specification, segmentation and inventory of relevant elements of analysis**

Drawing from the theoretical goal of this research, to understand the deeper structure of meaning of Malaysian image from a British perspective, specific element (units of analysis) is to be derived from the closed corpus of data. This process of segmentation is to break the whole into parts for the purpose of analysis and better understanding. The segmentation of this section is in two folds. The first division is to have one segment for visual image and another for textual image. Next is to identify the elements (sub-segments) within each of these umbrella segments. This segmentation process is explained as a graphical representation below:





**Figure 7.1: Levels of segmentation**

From the figure above, image as a whole in the top most box is both the textual and visual image of Malaysia as projected in the dossiers. The following division; visual and textual image, will then go through a series of further segmentation which will be the task of this section. At this juncture, V1 to V5 and T1 to T5 are not the actual numbers of visual and textual segments but has been illustrated for the purpose of understanding.

Prior to moving into the detailed segmentation it is worthwhile to have a look at the broader picture; type of heading these dossiers carry in promoting Malaysia. For instance, is the entire dossier dedicated in promoting Malaysia or does Malaysia fall under the geographical cluster (i.e. worldwide, Far East). The themes that Malaysia was promoted are as shown in the figure below:

**Table 7.1 Dossier themes representing Malaysia**

Dossier numbers	Themes representing Malaysia	Frequency
D1, D9	Orient	2
D2, D12, D13, D15	Name of Company	4
D3, D6, D8, D16, D18, D19	Worldwide	6
D4, D10	Malaysia	2
D5, D14	Far East	2
D7, D11	Asia	2
D17	Tropical	1

The themes assessed in the above table are the textual messages that appeared on the front cover of the dossiers. Though the front cover may not be in the context of the closed corpus of the semiotic analysis, but it was felt essential to include it at least from a textual context to get a feel of where or which category does Malaysia fall into. The visual images were omitted from this particular exercise due to the complex and multiple images that were presented that did not represent Malaysia, maybe with the exception of the dossiers (D4 & D10), which only promoted Malaysia. D1 till D19 are the labels for the 19 dossiers that are being assessed. Bearing in mind that the above list is actually the list recommended by the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board in London, it was surprising that only two (D4 & D10) out of the 19 dossiers actually had the word Malaysia on the front cover of the dossier. This definitely may not be a good start, especially when a tourist walks into a travel agency and glances through the

dossiers on exhibit. Suppose the tourist knows of Malaysia, and he or she wants to gather more information, then it is fine, but we are also looking at the market that is not aware of Malaysia. And for awareness creation, having only 2 out of 19 definitely is not a good statistic.

On the other hand, one may argue that same it is in the case of other countries including Malaysia's competitors (i.e. Thailand and Singapore) in the Far East. Looking at the themes above this may be true. Observing from a broader angle, the two main categories these dossiers falls into includes: I) geographical category – worldwide, orient, Asia, tropical, Far East and Malaysia, and II) the name of the company (organisation) promoting Malaysia. Assuming the argument of other countries falling into similar geographical cluster is true, and from a brief examination it appears that even Malaysia's regional competitors (i.e. Thailand and Singapore) are in the same dossiers; then comes the question of direct competition. Malaysia with its rather ambivalent image will have to compete with the might of Thailand's cultural and heritage image. Then there is Singapore, due to its small size, stronger economy and its airline that does the promotional work of the nation, appears to be more attractive, even though it may just be a stopover destination. Hence, these are issue that has to be tackled if Malaysia were to position herself better amongst the British tourists.

Lets also briefly look into the other category: company's name on front cover. This, I would say is purely due to a business angle. The 4 dossiers (D2, D12, D13, D15) that

had their respective company name instead are tour operator based and not travel agents. Therefore, we are talking about business units that are not only promoting and positioning a destination, but are organisations that are competing to create a positive image/identity for themselves to be a leader in their business. I must say, that these tour operators are very creative and innovative in projecting their image. Simply because the name chosen for the company, also represents the image (i.e. exotic, activity based, adventure based) of the destinations they are selling. When the company's name has a strong image, the products offered sells easily and D2 is a good example of it. It is well established and well known. So, the MTPB having an affiliation with D2 helps promote the Malaysian image. One issue that requires careful consideration on the front page of these company-based dossiers is that beside the names of their company (in big print) there was also a tendency of putting the name of the destinations in small print. For instance, the name of Borneo and not Malaysia appeared on one of the dossiers, and even worst is when the competitors name appeared and nothing of Malaysia was mentioned. What we can learn here is that, probably awareness creation is not only required by the potential tourist should also be targeted to those who are selling Malaysia as a destination.

Knowing this deficiency, or on a positive note, the opportunity, this is an area which can be tapped into to create better awareness amongst British tourists, tour operators and travel agents to project a strong image of Malaysia.

Coming back to the segmentation of the closed corpus data for semiotic analysis, table 7.2 below illustrates the elements that emerged both visually and textually between dossiers 1 and 19.

**Table 7.2 Segmentation of Visual and textual elements of the dossiers**

IMAGE AS WHOLE			
VISUAL IMAGE		TEXTUAL IMAGE	
V1	Accommodation {16}	T1	Island, Beach, Sea, Sand {16}
V2	Beach, Sea, Sand {15}	T2	Rainforest {15}
V3	Golf Course {7}	T3	Tropical, Weather, Climate {17}
V4	Forest {16}	T4	Accommodation (hotel, resort) {17}
V5	Skyscrapers (Twin tower) {14}	T5	Facilities {15}
V6	Swimming pool/swimming {13}	T6	Village {9}
V7	Wildlife (fauna/flora) {15}	T7	Classic/ elegance {2}
V8	Activity (rock climbing) {12}	T8	Family, Children {6}
V9	Gastronomy (spices, food) {6}	T9	Natural beauty {13}
V10	Palm tree (coconut) {14}	T10	Wildlife (animals and plants) {14}
V11	Children/family {6}	T11	Destination (Penang, Langkawi) {19}
V12	Couple {8}	T12	Accessibility (Flight, motorway) {4}
V13	Village house (on stilts) {8}	T13	Activities (snorkelling) {9}
V14	Map {16}	T14	Tour type (multi-centre) {11}
V15	Historic/cultural {11}	T15	Culture & multi-ethnicity {12}
V16	Sunset {7}	T16	Colonial/Heritage {11}
V17	Local people {11}	T17	Liveliness (vibrant, charming) {11}
V18	Agro tourism (paddy) {6}	T18	Shopping {9}
		T19	Golf {6}
		T20	Spa {9}

*\* {} is the frequency of occurrence of the image in the dossiers.*

For textual image segmentation, the elements are derived from words and phrases that described the image and for the visual image it was the object or action portrayed in the dossiers. V1 to V18 are the elements that occurred as visual image in the dossiers whereas T1 to T20 are elements that occurred as textual image in the dossiers. Similar to the earlier observation of the front cover, a basic content analysis (Bauer, 2000) was

carried out to find out the frequency of occurrence of these elements. This part of the semiotic analysis is quantitative in nature.

Taking a step further, these elements can be combined to create themes that the elements could possibly fall under. The creation of themes is a step taken in bringing together the elements to look at it from a holistic angle. The earlier part gives an account of the number and frequency of elements occurred. The numerical section though essential, does not provide a holistic theme, which is the aim of the semiotic analysis. At this point, the data occurs as in parts of textual image and visual image. And the structure of data is also viewed from a singular perspective. For instance the image of sunset seen just as a picture of sun but without taking into account that it may mean romantic environment. Hence the challenge now is to bring these segmented parts as a whole. And for that, the understanding of the 'syntagmatic-paradigmatic' concept as discussed earlier is required. With the application of this concept the understanding of the structural relationship both horizontally and vertically is possible. Drawing and combining from V1 to V18 and T1 to T20, the outcome of the application of this concept is the six emergent themes, namely:

- Modernisation
- Wilderness/Eco-friendly
- Preservation/Heritage
- Destination for all walks of life
- Richness/diversity
- Rustic/Exotic

For instance, accommodation (V1, T4), skyscrapers (V5), facilities (T5), elegance, comfort, luxury (T7), accessibility (T12), liveliness (T17) and shopping (T18) projects Malaysia as a *modernised* and civilised nation and society. The highlights of modern Malaysia include the Petronas Twin Towers; shopping malls with products of international leading brands; vibrant, charming and chic environment; infrastructures like the international airport and highways (motorways) and high standard hotels and resort facilities that projects the feel of comfort, luxury and elegance.

On the other hand, the images of pitcher plant, orang utan and forest (V4, V7, T2, T10) emphasise the natural beauty (T9), projecting a *wilderness/eco-friendly* image of Malaysia that shows that the conservation of nature has not been neglected by the impacts of modernisation. *Heritage/Preservation* of Malaysia is reflected by the colonial architecture (T16, V15) that is well preserved in the midst of the skyscrapers backdrop. The heritage and cultural element also shows of the multi-ethnicity (T6, T15, V13, V17) and the cultural harmony that exist amongst the three major ethnic groups, namely Malays, Chinese and Indians. Multi-ethnicity is not the only image to project Malaysia's *richness/diversity*. The *richness/diversity* is also portrayed by Malaysia's geographical image (V2, T1, T2, V4, T3, T9). Malaysia divided into east and west by the South China Sea has a wide range of natural resources from under the sea right to the highest peak in South East Asia. The images highlighted are; the long sandy beaches (i.e. Penang, Langkawi, Tioman); the deep-sea world (i.e. sipadan); the highlands (i.e. Mount Kinabalu); the valleys (i.e. Klang Valley) where most inhabitants

(V17) and land-use (V18) activities can be seen. Malaysia's physical geography coupled with the weather conditions provides the perfect climatic environment – The Tropical Rainforest – that is amongst the richest bio-diversity on earth.

Having the blend of modernisation, cultural heritage, and richness/diversity, the Malaysian image is projected as a *destination that suits all walks of life*. This is projected in a wide range of ways. If it is activity (T13, V8) based, then images of snorkelling, scuba diving, mountain climbing, rock climbing and spelunking (caving) for the more adventurous heart is projected. Images with children's face painted, hotel rooms with cartoon characters, wading pool and swimming pool with parents and children having fun are projected to show the suitability of Malaysia as a holiday destination for families. Images of a couple walking on a long sandy beach; sitting by the pool facing the sea during sunset (V12, V16); fine dining (V9); sitting in a dim lit room and honeymoon package (T14) provides the image of privacy and space (uncrowdedness) that suits couples (adult) tourists. And for the more sophisticated tourist (i.e. businessman, luxury), images of golf course (V3, T19), spas (T20), shopping (T18), liveliness (T17), IT facilities (T5) are projected. On a different note, it is also important to take notice that tourist are provided with information that will facilitate them in terms of accessibility (T12, T14). The fly-drive packages promoted emphasise the convenience of left hand drive in Malaysia that is compatible to the UK system. Similarly, there are also multi-centre packages that show that accessibility and connectivity is not an issue when travelling to or in Malaysia. Though Malaysia's

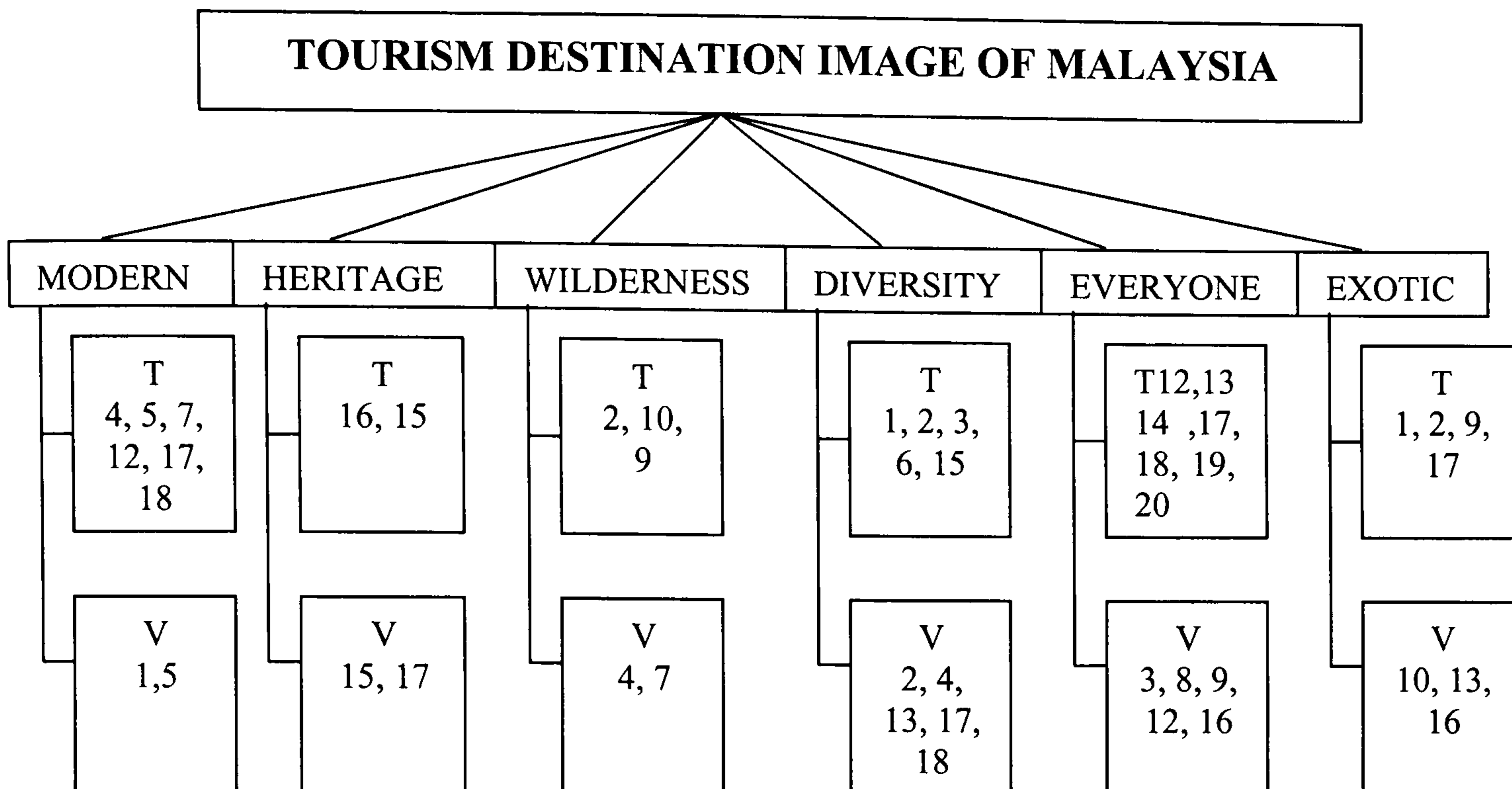


natural resources are plenty, the destinations projected are namely Kuala Lumpur that gives the idea of modernisation & heritage; Borneo the image of wilderness, Penang projecting an image of richness/diversity and heritage; while Langkawi, Tioman, Redang and Pangkor Laut filling in the gap of providing something for tourists of all walks of life. Till now, the images projected has been more physical the psychological. The dossiers also attempted to project the *rustic/exotic* feeling about Malaysia. Especially in the gastronomy (V9) and scenic section (V13, V16, V10, T9, T17, T1, T2). The images of village house on stilts, crystal clear sea water, sandy beaches, spices, variety of food, palm trees, sun sets, pristine forest and lively nightlife brings out the psychological components of image by creating an exotic/rustic aura about the destination.

### **7.2.3 Taxonomy of combined elements to extract the underlying meaning**

As the title of this section sums up, the purpose of it is first to build up taxonomy derived from the element and themes that are derived from the inventory. Once taxonomy is established, the next step is to probe the underlying structure of the meaning. That means going a step further from just understanding the denotative meaning and prod into its connotative meaning. This is where the myth, fantasy and dreams projected by the images in the dossiers are discussed. But firstly, is the creation of taxonomy (Figure 7.2) of possible elements to understand the system of 'rules' by which they are combined.

**Figure 7.2 A semiotic taxonomy of Malaysian Destination Image**



The above taxonomy has three layers. The lowest layers divided into two sections; the visual elements (i.e.V1) and textual elements (i.e. T1) are the basic individualistic images projected. For instance, a textual phrase describing the ‘natural beauty’ or a visual; image illustrating ‘local people’. With the conceptual use of ‘syntagmatic-paradigmatic’ application, the second layers of themes (modern, heritage, wilderness, diversity, everyone, exotic) from the outcome of the combination of elements are made possible. The interaction and relationship of these 6 emergent themes is what create the holistic meaning of tourism destination image. Hence, understanding the top most layer of the taxonomy – the tourism destination image of Malaysia. In short, the direct meaning or denotation of the destination image of Malaysia is that: Malaysia has a harmonious blend of modernisation, at the same time preserving the cultural and heritage component of the nation. It also gives the message that the modernisation has

not been the cause for the nation to neglect her natural beauty by giving strong emphasis to wilderness. The Malaysian image also projects as a potpourri from both cultural and geographical diversity; from ethnic and cultural richness to the diversity of the natural resources. These strengths are converted into activities and tourism packages to everyone (people of all walks of life) in terms of facilities, amenities, activities and infrastructures. Last but not least, the psychological element of being rustic and exotic too is portrayed to create a tingling feeling amongst the potential tourists.

Until this point, the discussion of the data set has been rather straightforward or descriptive (denotative) in nature. The next attempt is to extract and interpret the underlying structure of the meaning of the images projected. Though the earlier part was highly denotative, there was an element of connotation towards the end, which is the psychological element of creating the aura of a destination to be unique, rustic and exotic. And this will be a good departure point to embark on the connotative meaning. At the saturation point of product offering and competition amongst one destination to the other, this will be a worthwhile point for promoter and marketers to dwell into. Though there may be ethical queries of manipulating the actual image to the image projected, it can't be denied that a travel experience for most tourists is a dream or a fantasy come true. So, treading the connotative path with a right balance of creating the dream but at the same time not deviating from the actual truth of the destination, will be the challenge marketers of destination are facing and will face in the future.

Back to the connotative images of Malaysia as portrayed in the dossiers, it is the type of mind game; both subtle and hidden messages that requires probing. For instance, the images of spa resorts and golf courses are projected as luxury and elegance. This lifestyle is not possible for many people on a day-to-day living. This is a dream or a fantasy that a tourist will experience just from the dossiers or if materialises on a short period of time during their vacation. As Thurot & Thurot (1983) explains from a Marxist framework, it is just not a commercial competition any longer, but it is the differences in social class that is seen here. It brings forth the fact that it is the aristocrats' lifestyle that the lower classes experience on a short period during their holidays.

Uzzel (1984) whose work touched on myth and fantasies highlighted that the lives lived by tourist portrayed the image of good life, for instance an image of a masseuse massaging in a spa, and the waiter serving some exotic delicacies. Myth creation from the perspective of post-colonial theory (Echtner and Prasad, 2003) further supports the fact that the element of fantasy is emphasised in destination marketing brochures. Echtner and Prasad (2003) concluded that colonial legacies and stereotype images of Third World countries are utilised by destination promoters of the First world countries. All these are marketing tools a promoter can use to show that the tourist will be treated like a 'king'. The notion of exotic as explained earlier is supported by the work of Cohen (1989) with regards to authenticity of villages. But Cohen (1989), brought forward the issue that the image portrayed may be false identity. This may also be true

in the case of Malaysian image; For instance, the houses on the wooden stilts with a sunset backdrop portraying the exoticism of the destination. The issue here would be that, the service providers create these villages looking villas. Hence, loosing the originality of an actual environment. But the question again is do tourist really want to go through mosquito bites, face a cobra in front of them, in short have a rough and tough time? This question really depends on the maturity of the tourist and the level of difficulty they are willing to face. This scenario is well explained by Cooper (1994), by saying that the tourist wants to feel the adventure, nature, challenge and exoticism but with the certainty that there is comfort, convenience and safety in undertaking such activities. Therefore, in summary, there is no harm in creating dreams through the dossier image but with the increasing knowledge and maturity of tourists; there is an essential issue that must be addressed. That is a promoter should be truthful in delivering the message. Probably by stating the difficulty level, or even by saying that the experience can be felt either with luxury and comfort or in the true wilderness environment as desired by the tourist. The challenge here for the tourism industry is to have available the range of experience levels and the image projected that matches what is actual.

### **7.3 Knowledge interest**

In view of the main aim of this dissertation to understand the meaning of destination image, this chapter on semiotic analysis with its philosophical underpinnings has aided in uncovering the underlying structures and deeper meaning of image from the assessment of dossiers. As Echtner (1999) puts it, the collective contribution of this semiotic analysis has resulted in exposing the structure of the tourism experience as communicated by the language of tourism marketing. And to be specific the exposition of Malaysian image portrayed from a British perspective.

Thus, it is not the aim of this chapter on questioning of the statistical significance and numerical validity or reliability, but it is an attempt to understand the deeper meaning of destination image and explicating this understanding to achieve content validity. It is my hope that through this understanding of the content, better strategic decision making sense can be achieved.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

#### **8.1. Introduction**

Most discussion and suggestion actually have been addressed in each of the analysis and findings chapters. Nevertheless, this chapter is written to capture the entirety of this thesis, hence the entirety of the study of destination imagery: to revisit both theoretical and the operational framework and to see how much has been achieved and the new challenges that have occurred and which needs addressing in future research. This chapter besides, looking at the fact on whether this dissertation have achieved it's aim in understanding the meaning and measurement of destination imagery, also looks at triangulation as an approach to discuss the various methods and worldviews used in its attempt to capture the holistic view on destination imagery. The later part of this chapter moves on to recap the implications of this study, to discuss about the challenges ahead, to highlight the limitations encountered, what future holds and finally a note on how this whole research piece have contributed to knowledge.

#### **8.2 Major Findings**

The major findings of Malaysian tourism destination image from a British perspective are derived from four empirical studies. The empirical studies include assessment of imagery attributes from the perspectives of tourists, travel advisers, industry players and tourism dossiers. A brief account on the main findings of each empirical study will

be presented first, followed by discussion on the use of multi-method approach taken to address each empirical study.

### **8.2.1 Perceptions of tourists**

The study on tourists reveal that majority of respondents agree of Malaysia having a favourable overall image as a tourism destination. Attractions that fascinate the British tourists most are the natural (eco-friendly) environment, warm and sunny climate, wide range of cuisine, sandy beaches and relaxing environment. On safety, tourists feel that Malaysia's political stability as a favourable factor. The tourists indicated high level of satisfaction on the variety and quality of accommodation. Other facilities that appeared positive to the tourists include the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), recreation and sports and foreign exchange. Malaysian Airlines (MAS) frequent direct flights from the UK (London and Manchester) to Malaysia (Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Langkawi) emerged as one of the strong factors for Malaysia as a preferred tourism destination. The service perspectives indicated as favourable by tourists includes the efficiency of immigration staffs, the overall service quality and willingness of front line staffs. Furthermore, the tourists expressed satisfaction between the portrayed images prior to departure compared to the actual on site experience. Devaluation of Malaysian Ringgit against Pounds Sterling appeared to provide positive impact from a value for money angle. Tourists found domestic tourism packages, shopping, accommodation, domestic travel and food and beverage reasonably priced. The management policies factor that tourists found favourable include public and private sectors commitment



towards sustainable tourism. In short, the above-discussed favourable images of Malaysia subsequently resulted in majority of tourists indicating of their willingness to recommend Malaysia as a holiday destination to others as well as agreeing that Malaysia is well worth for a repeat visit.

Apart from conveying the positive points that Malaysia hold, the tourists expressed their concerns over certain attributes that could eventually make Malaysia as an unappealing destination. Heritage and cultural attractions somewhat appears weak from the tourists perspective. Another variable that emerged as unfavourable amongst tourists is the attractiveness of cities. In addition, tourist expressed their dissatisfaction on the health and safety issues especially on sanitation practices. In the context of facilities, tourists expressed lack of quality in smaller airports as compared to the superiority of the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). The tourists too were unsatisfied with tourism information that was unavailable to them. The efficiency and friendliness of service providers of local transportation appeared unfavourable. The unfriendly experience was also expressed at the tourists' interaction point with immigration officers. A more serious concern amongst the tourist appears from the promotional angle. Tourists give the impression that they are not entirely convinced with the promotions of both Malaysia as whole as well as specific destinations like island, adventure and sports. In addition, some service aspects that appeared to be unfavourable amongst tourists include manager's capabilities, performance standards, getting firsts instance assistance, taking action in response to tourists needs and

destination packaging. In terms of value for money, tourists were unsatisfied with regards to pricing of alcohol and international flights. The other key concerns include ambiguity of the Malaysian NTO's reputation in attracting tourists as well as tourists' perception on the uncertainty of the 'Malaysia Truly Asia' theme.

### **8.2.2 Perceptions of travel advisers**

Travel advisers perception of Malaysia's overall image appears to be highly positive. Amongst the attributes contributing to its positive attractiveness include natural environment, warm climate, sandy beaches, variety of cuisine and exotic atmosphere. Cleanliness and political stability appears as favourable attributes from travel advisers' viewpoint. Travel advisers think highly of Malaysia's tourism facilities. Amongst the favourable facilities are accommodation variety and quality, airport quality, recreation and sports availability, foreign exchange and children/baby facilities. Travel advisers' perception on the communication/transportation factor too appears highly positive. Frequent flights availability and bearable long-haul flying time from the UK to Malaysia are amongst the favourable images highlighted by the travel advisers. Travel advisers were highly satisfied with the telecommunication systems (i.e. telephone, fax, internet) in Malaysia. Ability of Malaysians to communicate in English is seen as a favourable attribute by the travel advisers. Hospitality and receptiveness of local towards visitors appears as a positive attribute. Travel advisers perceive that Malaysia as a whole and specific destinations (i.e. F1, island, adventure) are promoted well in the UK. On services, high standards of service quality, service providers willingness to

assist tourists at the first instance and portrayed image meeting the actual experience emerged as favourable attributes amongst the travel advisers. Excellent value for money for domestic tourism packages and meals appeared as the attractive cost/pricing attributes amongst travel adviser. On a business-to-business relationship, the travel advisers agree that excellent support from the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board is received. The travel advisers indicate that the preferred airlines for their client travelling to Malaysia are the Malaysian Airlines. In brief, travel advisers agree that the overall business-to-business relations with Malaysian counterparts are excellent. Overall, the travel advisers perceive Malaysia as a 'must visit' destination and strongly agree on 'Malaysia truly Asia' as an appropriate theme to promote Malaysia.

Moving on from favourable attributes, travel advisers have expressed reservations in certain aspects of the overall promotion of Malaysia as a destination. The attractiveness of historic/heritage sites, uniqueness of architecture and entertainment appeared as unfavourable from travel advisers' viewpoint. Travel advisers expressed uncertainty on the meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition (MICE) facilities. On communications, the use of information communication technology (ICT) appeared unfavourable. In addition, travel advisers expressed dissatisfaction for the pricing of international flights and alcohol purchases. Travel advisers commitment in promoting Malaysia, their ties with inbound tour operators in Malaysia and their use of ICT in promoting Malaysia appears as unfavourable from a business-to business angle.

### **8.2.3 Perceptions of industry players**

A brief account on favourable and unfavourable attributes representing the views of 8 industry representatives is presented in this section. 'Malaysia truly Asia' appears as favourable amongst industry players as a suitable brand to promote Malaysia. Cultural (multi-ethnic society) and geographical (island, mountain, beach) diversity emerges as the main attributes as to why the industry players agree upon this theme. However, some reservations on the theme 'Malaysia truly Asia' are expressed. This theme could be suitable to project Malaysia to the outside world but may not be appropriate for domestic tourism. Modernisation and its impact on cultural and attitudinal change upon the Malaysian society may not reflect the true Asian outlook. Another concern that emerged is that Malaysia truly Asia does not conjure up for action. The industry players address concern on the gap between introducing the brand and not providing the contents of what this brand portrays.

The theme destination image of Malaysia discusses of the various positives and negatives of image formation and sustainability. It was highlighted that one image is insufficient to project a destination. Multiple images may be required depending upon who the target markets are. Also mentioned was the lifecycle of an image. Upon achieving the targeted audience, the industry players suggest that a new campaign should be embarked though not entirely different from the previous campaign. An ambivalent aviation image contributing to a weak Malaysian image was also

highlighted. The industry players suggest that innovative and creative images inducing unique aura and mood are required to achieve success in this era of product saturation. Contrary thoughts occurred on the issue of positioning Malaysia as opposed to specific attractions. The business viewpoint suggests sell what is profitable irrespective of whether the image of Malaysia is portrayed. Whereas the academics and NTO recommend that the identity of Malaysia should precede any other form of promotion let it be specific activities (i.e. adventure tourism, agro-tourism, F1) or destinations (i.e. Borneo, Penang). Funding appeared as a major point of consideration. Image is delicate especially in the presence of negative media attacks. Therefore, sufficient funds should be made available for good publicity as well as to overturn negative media hype.

On competition, the industry players raised several issues of concern. The local population of some destinations in Malaysia are lesser than the number of tourists visiting that destination. This creates the danger of locals behaving like tourists that eventually would diminish the unique cultural atmosphere of that destination. Another concern is the weaker image of Malaysian Airlines as compared to its close competitors (i.e. Singapore Airline and Thai Airways). It is also highlighted that Singapore with lesser tourism resources appear to be more innovative while Thailand has the cultural and heritage strength that creates the unique ambience that Malaysia lacks.

On a different note, the industry players address one of the major challenges from an administrative angle. The prerogative of both state and federal governments and how

they communicate to make decisions appears to be the major challenge. The main divide that occur between federal and state as highlighted by the industry players appear to be the land use issue. The land use difference between state and federal emerges to be the starting point to create puzzlement in tourism decision-making. The various challenges faced by Malaysian tourism as a whole due to this division includes issues from promotional activities to the planning and development of tourism products. The states operate their own tourism promotional activities as well as their product development and maintenance. It appears that some states possess stronger image than the country. This creates internal competition and may portray a negative image externally, for instance, both state and federal competing for a booth space allocated for one representative from a country in an international exhibition. The industry players recommend for consolidated effort between state and federal, as this will further strengthen Malaysia's position as an attractive destination.

The consequences of not consolidating tourism efforts will translate into unfavourable impacts on tourism policies and leadership. The rotation policy exercised by the government appears to have an unfavourable impact. A personnel changing position from one industry to another in a five-year term means knowledge and experienced is not sustained. In addition, the industry players emphasise that the present situation of inappropriate personnel for tasks they are not specialised in should change. However, the industry players welcomed the government's effort in creating higher education opportunities in tourism to overcome the issue of inexperienced tourism personnel.

The industry players also emphasised on the role of civil service and their importance on exercising righteous policies without being victimised by unjust political intervention.

On a different note, the industry players spoke of terrorism and fundamentalism. The industry players recognise the fact that Islam being Malaysia's official religion draws negative attention from people abroad that do not understand Malaysia's policies and practices. Media hype revolving around fundamentalism and terrorism can create negative image for Malaysia as a tourism destination. However, the industry players give emphasis to measures that can be taken to create awareness through country familiarisation programmes organised to representatives' abroad. This includes sponsoring media groups abroad to visit Malaysia. In return journalism is expected to play the role of providing a positive Malaysian identity. The industry players were also quick in addressing the fundamental teachings of certain political groups as merely a route taken to gain political mileage.

The industry players' showed interest in privatisation and specialisation as an approach to improve Malaysian tourism industry's competency. Recent specialisation at the highest level in forming two ministries namely Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage and Ministry of Tourism to replace the former Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism itself is evidence of the complexity of the tourism industry that requires specialist attention to improve effectiveness. The industry players beliefs that privatisation of the

Malaysian Promotion Tourism Board (MTPB) can improve efficiency. The areas that need restructuring include the bureaucracy that is time consuming and conceal weaknesses. It is also mentioned that privatisation can reap economic benefits. Developing own advertising division instead of outsourcing will be one way to move ahead. This act besides being financially sound, also paves way for more networking opportunities, which normally is benefited by the advertisement agencies. The industry players emphasised the need for specialisation, as subdivisions within tourism can be better understood. The learning from these specialisations can be translated as valuable information for potential tourists and investors that are interested in Malaysian tourism.

Education and professionalism are areas that industry players want to see further enhancement. Suggestions include the formation of tourism academy that provides training and administers standardisation of tourism products and services. Another suggestion is the need to cross-pollinate personnel within various sectors in tourism, for instance, getting academics to participate in the tourism board and getting representatives from the tourism board to share their knowledge in an academic environment. The industry players also highlight that not having the right person with the right qualification in the right job as a drawback within the tourism sector. The positive growth in tourism education can be seen as a solution to the above issue. On education it appears that the private higher learning intuitions provide skills training whereas the public higher learning institutions focus on developing managerial ability.



Finally, the industry players concluded that, for Malaysia to be a successful tourism destination, there should be focus on continued enhancement of service and quality, involvement of wider range of agencies and collaboration amongst industry players.

#### **8.2.4 Perceptions derived from tourism dossiers**

Visual and textual images promoting Malaysia targeted at the UK market are assessed. The findings draw out highly favourable images as the purpose of this promotional materials are to create a positive impact. However, the nature of this empirical study that probes into deeper structure of meaning raises issues of concern. Issues include myth created by these textual and visual images.

Findings of the textual and visual images are grouped as six themes, namely, modernisation, wilderness/eco-friendly, preservation/heritage, destination for all walks of life, richness/diversity and exotic/rustic. The imagery portraying modernisation includes contemporary style accommodations, skyscrapers, liveliness, fashionable shopping environment, high-tech infrastructures and the feel of elegance, comfort and luxury. Conservation amidst development is the message given by the following theme, which is wilderness/eco-friendly environment. Images of flora and fauna including orang utan, hornbills, pitcher plant and lush tropical forest are projected. On a different note, the preservation/heritage imagery is reflected by the colonial past and historic and cultural background of the multi-ethnic society that represents Malaysia. Multi-ethnicity besides portraying the heritage imagery also provides the impressions of

richness/diversity, which is the following theme. Another set of imagery depicting richness/diversity is from a geographical angle. Images of mountains, beaches, islands and deep-sea world to name a few are projected. Moving on from the above-mentioned resource based themes are the activities that is suitable and can be carried out by tourists. This theme that provides activities for various tourists with different needs is destination that suits all walks of life. The images portrayed include scuba diving, snorkelling and mountain climbing for adventure tourism. Images of children with their face painted, wading pool and hotel rooms with cartoon characters projecting Malaysia as a suitable family holiday destination. Images of couples walking on long sandy beach, fine dining, sitting by the pool, facing sunset provides the image of privacy and space that suits couples (adult) market. Images of golf courses, spas, liveliness and shopping environment are projected for the more sophisticated tourists. Finally, the theme exotic/rustic is represented by the images of palm trees, sunset, spices, variety of food and crystal clear seawater that creates the exotic/rustic aura, which fulfil the psychological needs of the tourists.

The concerning issue of these promotional material arises from an ethical angle. This is an issue between truth and myth. The truth is that the luxury and elegance portrayed by the images are lifestyle not possible for many people on a day-to-day living. These are lifestyles of aristocrats that eventually spell out the differences in social class. Then, the question is whether providing tourist the opportunity to accomplish their myth is a justified act? Travel has become part of modern day lifestyle. People earn, allocate their

disposable income, plan and look forward for holidays. People too expect some form of comfort and safety in exploring new horizons. Based upon these circumstances, a win-win situation amongst tourism marketers, tourists and the destination can be achieved. The destination and tourism marketers can enjoy the economic benefit while the tourists will get the joy of experiencing their fantasy. However, a right balance between reality and myth is required to avoid exploitation and dissatisfaction. The power of money from developed countries can have adverse effect on the local community and the environment of a developing destination. Therefore, it is important for the respective authorities (i.e. tourism ministry) to get the right balance during planning, development and continued monitoring phases of the destination. The right balance is also required between the portrayed images by the promoters compared to the actual experience of the tourists. Any imbalance or gap will create unfavourable image for the destination. In conclusion, a measured myth creation that provides satisfaction to all parties involved is acceptable.

### **8.2.5 Multi-method fusion**

The multi-method approach applied in this thesis helped to reduce methodological limitation and philosophical confusion. The application of Synergistic Holism that gives priority to reality over rules is a key factor in achieving this methodological fusion. The characteristics of the four empirical studies are evidence on how multi-method approach has assisted in capturing the concept of destination image in a holistic manner.

The main characteristics of the empirical studies on tourist and travel advisers include its deductive nature and research carried out from an outsider's viewpoint. The deductive nature is evident through the use of variables and numeric assignment to the attributes studied. The main advantage of this approach includes respondent being able to complete the survey at his or her own pace. The outsider's position (distance between researcher and subject) removes interviewer bias. Other advantages of this self-administered survey include its cost effective characteristic and the ability to reach respondents who are geographically apart (mail survey as in the empirical study on travel advisers). The disadvantages encountered in these two empirical studies include time constraints in receiving the response, incomplete response, uncertainty on whether response had come from the targeted respondent and finally the inability to make rapport with respondents.

These shortcomings are answered by the empirical studies on industry players and tourism dossiers. The inductive nature and research carried out from an insider's viewpoint are the main characteristics of the empirical study on industry players. Since the authors of the dossiers and the researcher do not come in contact, an outsider's viewpoint is held for the study of tourism dossiers. Besides this difference, other characteristics of both the empirical studies on industry players and tourism dossiers are similar. The inductive nature is evident through the textual interpretive approach taken to address the themes that are studied. The advantages of this approach include the

richness of emergent data and establishing good rapport with respondents. The disadvantages of this approach come from a positivist criticism on the reliability of data. Other disadvantages include difficulty in accessing respondents; time-consuming process and findings that could not be generalised.

The combination of various approaches resulted in cancelling each other's limitations. That means strengthening the validity of the study by addressing the imagery issues from various viewpoints. Besides creating a fusion at a methodological level as discussed above, this dissertation's attempt in creating fusion at a philosophical level is evident from the context of each empirical study. The study on tourists and travel advisers begins with a positivism outlook that adopts a deductive approach. However, discussion of findings incorporates thematic and interpretive approach resembling a phenomenological stance. On a different note, the study on industry players and tourism dossiers that begins with a phenomenology worldview incorporates themes and structure that resembles a positivism outlook. The discussion on the multi-method approach above is absorbed from a triangulation concept. The concept of triangulation and its application on this thesis will be discussed next.

### **8.3 Triangulation**

The term triangulation, which owes its roots to, the field of survey (Thompson, 1995) have been broadly used in the social sciences since 60's (Webb, 1966) which includes tourism (Seaton , 1997) and has now come under criticism by several social scientist (Oppermann, 2000; Blaikie, 1991) of the way it is used. The criticism addressed, of

many aspects, includes that triangulation have to be conducted within one worldview and not from a cross worldview angle. The reason for this, which is also another aspect of the criticism, is due to the origin of the word triangulation that was used in survey to complete a triangular system. Due to this survey origin, even the social scientist feels that whatever variation of triangulations (Denzin, 1978) used; data, investigator, methodological or theory triangulation it should be examined within the context of one worldview, hence one system. However, for the purpose of this thesis, we know that such criticism will be considered as not holding a strong basis. Especially, from the theoretical and operational framework that have identified the imagery study requiring a multi-dimensional approach and as suggested by the multi-perspective systems thinking the study requires fusion of various worldviews. However, if such critics don't go beyond the superficial meaning of triangulation to understand the deeper structure of meaning of to triangulate, which could also mean that to have views of the intermingling systems from the various points of the so called triangles, then the worldview of synergistic holism that puts the search of truth before rules as discussed in the research process chapter will suffice as a singular worldview encompassing the various worldviews in answering this sort of criticism.

Hence for the purpose of this thesis, triangulation means looking at destination imagery just not from one point, but from various points. The different types of triangulation used include:

- Data triangulation
- Theory triangulation
- Methodological triangulation, and
- Interdisciplinary triangulation

The data sets used are both from secondary data source (literature review) and exploratory study to formulate the questionnaire for the tourists and travel advisers. As for the data source used to examine the visual and textual context of imagery, tourism dossiers compiled from travel advisers were utilised. And the data source to assess the views of various industry players' actually comes from the text of the in-depth interviews. Hence, various data sources are used to cross-examine the soundness of response between one source and the other and how much bearing one set of data source has on the other. For instance, parallel can be drawn from the way sun, sand sea imagery presented in the dossiers that makes the beach imagery as popular and favoured amongst the tourist as well as the tour operator. It also shows that as mentioned by one of the interviewees, that the emphasis of long, sandy, non-crowded beaches as being the emphasis of the tourism board. The above example shows a rather straightforward relationship between one data source and the other. However, the lack of awareness creation of the plural society that relates to the present tagline 'Malaysia Truly Asia' though became transparent in the ambivalence shown by tourist and travel

advisers seems not to be of an issue for all except one interviewee. It shows that the policy makers may think they are doing the right job to get the message across but down the line, when comes to implementation, something looks not right and requires attention. Hence, if only one data source had been used this shortcoming would not have been able to surface.

The theoretical/philosophical triangulation saw the use of structuralism in dossier analysis, positivism in tourist and travel advisers' analyses and interpretive in the assessment of the industry players' views. The underpinning philosophies that translated to research designs to apply a deduction's approach (positivism) as compared to an all-encompassing (interpretive) approach filled in the gap as well as paved path to understand the meaning and measurement from both the known and unknown aspects of imagery. For instance, the known data sets (variables) were used in finding out the imagery aspect from a positivist angle; however the interpretive theory actually brought into emergence the unknown facts of imagery. For instance, I would not have come to know about the importance of airport management that have emerged basically due to the reason the issue being raised by many industry players as being one of the reasons for why Malaysian tourism may not be performing well, as compared to its competitors (Singapore and Thailand) who have established air-hub status.

Methodological triangulation, which can be considered as a by-product of theoretical triangulation, also provides various platforms to assess imagery. Discourse analysis, semiotic analysis and descriptive statistics were used as methodologies for the industry



players, dossiers and travels advisers and tourists respectively. Discourse and semiotic analyses both provided the ingredient to understand the meanings of imagery and its connectivity between one sub-system and the other within the tourism imagery systems context while the descriptive statistic produced measurements that made sense to the meaning of this destination imagery.

Finally, the interdisciplinary triangulation seemed evident in addressing the imagery systems. The use of linguistics in dossier analysis, philosophy in industry player analysis and statistics in travel advisers and tourists analyses completed the variations of triangulation adapted in conducting this thesis. Though, the investigator triangulation was not possible due to the scope of a PhD degree plus the lack of resources especially from a monetary sense to appoint a research assistant, the effort taken to balance any form of biasness in the findings by employing the other aspects of triangulation have definitely provided better hindsight and soundness in demonstrating the findings of this study.

#### **8.4 General Implications**

The implications of this study are discussed based on the advantages and challenges of destination imagery as a whole and Malaysia's destination imagery from British perspectives in specific, as and where appropriate.

Amongst Malaysia's main advantages as a destination especially from a British perspective is the two nations long history since the colonial days till today's relationship as being part of the Commonwealth nations. From trade/industry up to visiting friends and relatives have all been advantageous components that have been derived from this longstanding relationship in building favourable imagery for Malaysia. Besides, Malaysia's strength as a nation where, by and large of the population with a fair command of communicative English, makes it is an added value that will make the tourist feel at ease. Malaysia is also gifted with it natural beauty amidst modern technology. The conservation of national parks of her rich biodiversity of flora and fauna coupled with the modern facilities like the Kuala Lumpur International Airport are all attractive advantages of Malaysia. With Britons having an affinity towards sun, sand and sea to escape the cold and wet British weather, no better place than the long sandy and non-crowded beaches that are available in abundance in Malaysia is a strong selling point. Ethnic pluralism of Malaysia does not only act as an attractiveness of cultural diversity (food, temples, architecture, faces, traditions), but this mix of these eastern value provides a good blend of warm and welcoming hospitality.

Some of the other advantages Malaysia have but not exploited well would be the heritage/cultural element as well as the royalty element. Having a rich past from the days where ancient Indian empires occupied the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia (remnants of Hindu temple at Lembah Bujang as excavated evidence); to the era (14<sup>th</sup>

century) of Malacca being the heart and seaport of the trading centre for traders namely from China, India, Arab; to the days (year 1511 until 1957) when Portuguese, Dutch, British and for a short spell Japanese occupied, all contribute to the rich cultural past. For one reason or the other, these elements are not only tapped into but also to certain extent removed and suppressed for the sake of building a new Malaysian identity. Changing the name of places and replacing historical buildings rather than restoring it are some of the incidents that have taken place. National pride and identity is essential but erasing the past that actually has formed Malaysia to what Malaysia is today seems hypocritical. This is a challenge for Malaysian tourism to address and act upon if success in favourable image creation is to be sustained.

Moving on to the other advantageous aspect; Malaysia and her sovereignty, of the 13 states that constitutes Malaysia, 9 of it is ruled by royal families. The royalties of each state known as sultan (ruler of the state), on a five-year rotation system gets the privilege to become the King of Malaysia. We are talking of living kings and queens, royalties in existence, their on-going ceremonies and traditions, which are so unique, yet not capitalised by the Malaysian tourism industry. There are so many nations out there who are using the royalty element of their past, their kingdoms and ruin of the castles and palaces to attract tourist. But, in Malaysia we speak of 9 royal families who are still ruling and yet not being cleverly utilised as an attraction – a potential area.

One of the major challenges that Malaysian tourism needs to address includes its policy implications with regards to the components in association as per the operational

framework. The interconnected components in the framework that consist of the government, employees, suppliers, investors, customers, public and firms have been examined through the empirical study in one form or the other. For instance, the assessments on tourist and travel advisers have included variables constituting these components to get the views and to draw out the performance on the relationship of these components. Similarly, a number of decision makers comprising of employees, government, firms, and suppliers have given their views on what they think would be the right mould to bring Malaysian tourism forward.

From the findings and discussion of the analyses chapters, it comes to surface that what ever challenges that has arise are all symptoms of the root cause of a lack of soundness in the communication, relationship and partnership of the components in the network of association to form a systemic and cohesive liaison. It appears that NTO's like the MTPB have handful activities to work on hence may not be the right organisation to achieve the challenge in forming a cohesive alliance amongst the components within the imagery network.

The suggestions are that, an organisation has to be formed, and this organisation should have the 'cloud' to pull together all parties involved. Then the right policies should be put in place namely to achieve the followings:

- To set service standards across the service delivery of tourism products. This includes the exercises of rating/ranking (i.e. hotels), licensing (i.e. tour guides), training and refresher trainings and certification to name a few.
- To improve the communications between the actors, sectors and industry players to gather feedback and to know the actual issues of each component that plays a role in the service delivery. For this, consistent meetings good feedback systems plus an attitude to be open, receptive and analytical is required.
- To produce and incorporate people with 'tourism mind' so that the above two points can be achieved in an easier manner. With many Malaysian higher institutions providing qualifications within a tourism context, hopefully Malaysia can expect many representatives within the tourism industry in future will have a tourism sense.
- To provide an extensive and exhaustive database that is easily and readily accessible to people in and interested in the tourism industry. This is where academics/researchers can step in to provide the analytic dimension of the issues that arise for the practitioners.

If the above ingredients can be incorporated and the right mechanism be established, then identifying and rectifying symptoms that create ambivalent an unfavourable images can be tackled more efficiently and effectively.

## **8.5 Formulating Best Practices – Putting Theory Into Practice**

The entirety of this thesis can be summarised into a five-phase process, evolving from theoretical foundation into pragmatic applications as listed below:

- I) Theoretical formulation
- II) Crystallisation of theory
- III) Linking theory to reality
- IV) Empirical testing
- V) Deriving best practices

The first phase, theoretical formulation consists of the general aim, specific objective and the conceptual framework. To recap, the general aim of this thesis is to understand the known, knowable, unknown and unknowable of the tourism destination image. This general aim has been achieved namely the known and knowable aspects through the questionnaire surveys and the unknown and unknowable that emerged through both discourse and semiotic analysis. As for the specifics objectives, the first objective – exploring and crystallising the meaning and measurement of destination image is reflected and achieved in the extant literature and exploration and execution chapters. The second objective – formulating framework to address TDI in a holistic manner is achieved in chapter 2 (conceptual framework) and chapter 3 (operational framework). The third objective – using Malaysia as a case from a British perspective to apply the formulated theory into practice is achieved through the empirical studies of descriptive statistics on travel advisers and tourists, discourse analysis on industry players and

semiotic analysis on dossiers. The details of the conceptual framework are also evident in the empirical work. Senses component was presented in the psychologically oriented questions in the survey to travel advisers and tourists and also emerged in the semiotic analysis of the dossiers. The features component appeared in the questionnaire. The actors and sectors components were covered in the discourse analysis and descriptive statistics. The use of various methodologies is itself evident where three different worldviews that had been adapted in the empirical study to address the concept of imagery.

Moving on to the second phase is the crystallisation of theory. Chapter 3 – Exploration and execution crystallises the conceptual framework derived from the literature review. Beyond performing the confirmatory task, the exploration phase through preliminary field study provided nine propositions of which some were merely to confirm the conceptual framework and other were emergent components that were included in the later part of the empirical study.

The third phase was rather crucial where these concepts and gaps identified required a framework - a bridge to put theory into practice. Systems thinking provided the platform to link theory to practice and eventually paved way to reach the aims and objectives of this thesis.

Phase 4 saw the operational framework components of systems thinking in action through the empirical studies carried out. Descriptive statistics in one way or the other covered components like government, employees, suppliers, investors, customers, public and firm. The discourse analysis also to a certain extent covered government, firm, supplier and public. The semiotic analysis touched on the deeper structure of meaning of the components within this operational framework.

Finally, the fifth phase basically draws from the earlier process of research to formulate best practices for destination imagery. To achieve this, a TOWS (threats, opportunities, weaknesses and strengths) matrix as per table 8.1 is presented below. The variables highlighted are the gist of the finding from the empirical evidence. Although other variables may have occurred in the analyses chapters, only those that were crucial has been highlighted in the TOWS matrix in order to formulate best practices for imagery studies.



**Table 8.1 TOWS matrix of Malaysian destination image**

	T	O	W	S
Empirical 1 (Tourist)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terror</li> <li>• Crowd</li> <li>• Fake</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service</li> <li>• Facility</li> <li>• Pluralism</li> <li>• Filming</li> <li>• Rural</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Heritage</li> <li>• Alcohol</li> <li>• City</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature</li> <li>• Climate</li> <li>• Beach</li> <li>• Cuisine</li> <li>• Stability</li> </ul>
Empirical 2 (Travel advisers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rewards</li> <li>• Commitment</li> <li>• Partnership</li> <li>• ICT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MICE</li> <li>• E-commerce</li> <li>• Pluralism</li> <li>• Rural</li> <li>• Filming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage</li> <li>• Alcohol</li> <li>• Transport</li> <li>• Promotion</li> <li>• NTO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nature</li> <li>• Climate</li> <li>• Beach</li> <li>• Cuisine</li> <li>• Stability</li> </ul>
Empirical 3 (Industry players)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamentalism</li> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Professionalism</li> <li>• State/federal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiplicity</li> <li>• Partnership</li> <li>• Innovation</li> <li>• Training</li> <li>• Specialisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Networking</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English</li> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Geography</li> <li>• Ethnicity</li> </ul>
Empirical 4 (Dossiers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competitor</li> <li>• Identity</li> <li>• Fantasy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICT</li> <li>• VFR</li> <li>• MICE</li> <li>• Niche</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Airlines</li> <li>• Airport</li> <li>• Intimacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern</li> <li>• Eco-friendly</li> <li>• Heritage</li> <li>• Dining</li> <li>• Exotic</li> </ul>

On threats, the tourists indicated terrorism, crowdedness and fake products as concerning variables. The travel advisers indicated low rewards, lack of commitment, avenue for partnership and the lack of use of ICT as threats. The industry players saw fundamentalism, leadership, professionalism and differences between the state and federal government as a threat. Meanwhile, the threats that can be derived from the dossiers are that competitors have better positioning and stronger identity and the other threat is that the fantasy created in brochure may be far away from the reality.

On opportunities, the tourists felt that Malaysia has the potential to improve the service standards, facilities, rural tourism while emphasising on pluralism and creating awareness through the film industry. The travel advisers, besides mentioning the similar attributes like filming, rural tourism and pluralism also highlighted the potential of MICE market and the use of ICT to promote and position Malaysia. The industry players highlighted the multiple images Malaysia can project along with opportunities for enhanced partnership, innovative products, professional training and specialised functional departments within the tourism industry. The dossiers, besides highlighting MICE and ICT, also paved way for less exploited market for instance the VFR and other niche markets like the youths.

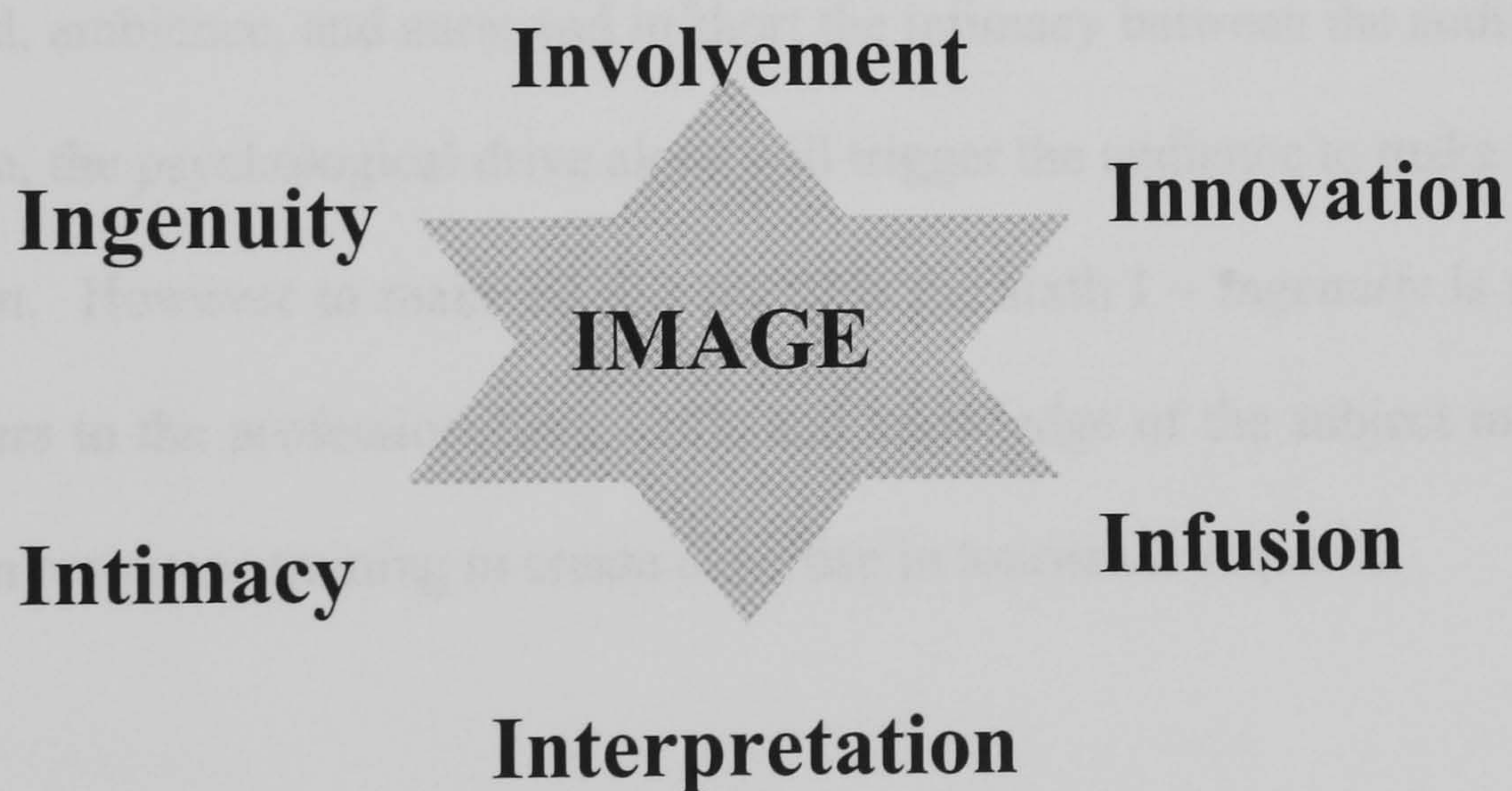
On weaknesses, the tourists highlighted the less friendly family/children environment, heritage tourism, availability and price of alcohol and lack of attractive cities. Besides alcohol and heritage, the travel advisers highlighted local transportation, the identity of NTO and promotional activities as weakness for Malaysian tourism. The industry players highlighted marketing, networking, lack of cultural pluralism and identity crisis as Malaysia's weaknesses. From the dossiers, it can be derived that the airlines and airport are not playing an essential role while the interpretation of the dossiers is not all that successful in creating the intimacy between the tourist and the destination.

Finally, on strengths, the tourists and travel advisers had identified similar variables like nature, climate, sandy beach, cuisine and political stability as the attractive

variables. The industry players highlighted English as a widely spoken language, the emphasis on diversity both geographically and culturally and the multi-ethnic population as the strength of Malaysian tourism. And from the dossiers, it can be derived that Malaysia is portrayed as a modern and eco-friendly destination that is rich in heritage, interesting for dining and provides an exotic environment.

In this final part of this section I shall draw upon my research experience and formulate the best practices to make imagery a success. In a nutshell, for a successful destination image the 6-I prescription is required. Figure 8.1 shows the 6-points (6-I) that combines together to make the parent I – Image a success. Though these prescriptions are not definitive but are essential in providing the right direction towards a successful image formation and formulation.

**Figure 8.1 Imagery's 6-point best practices prescription**



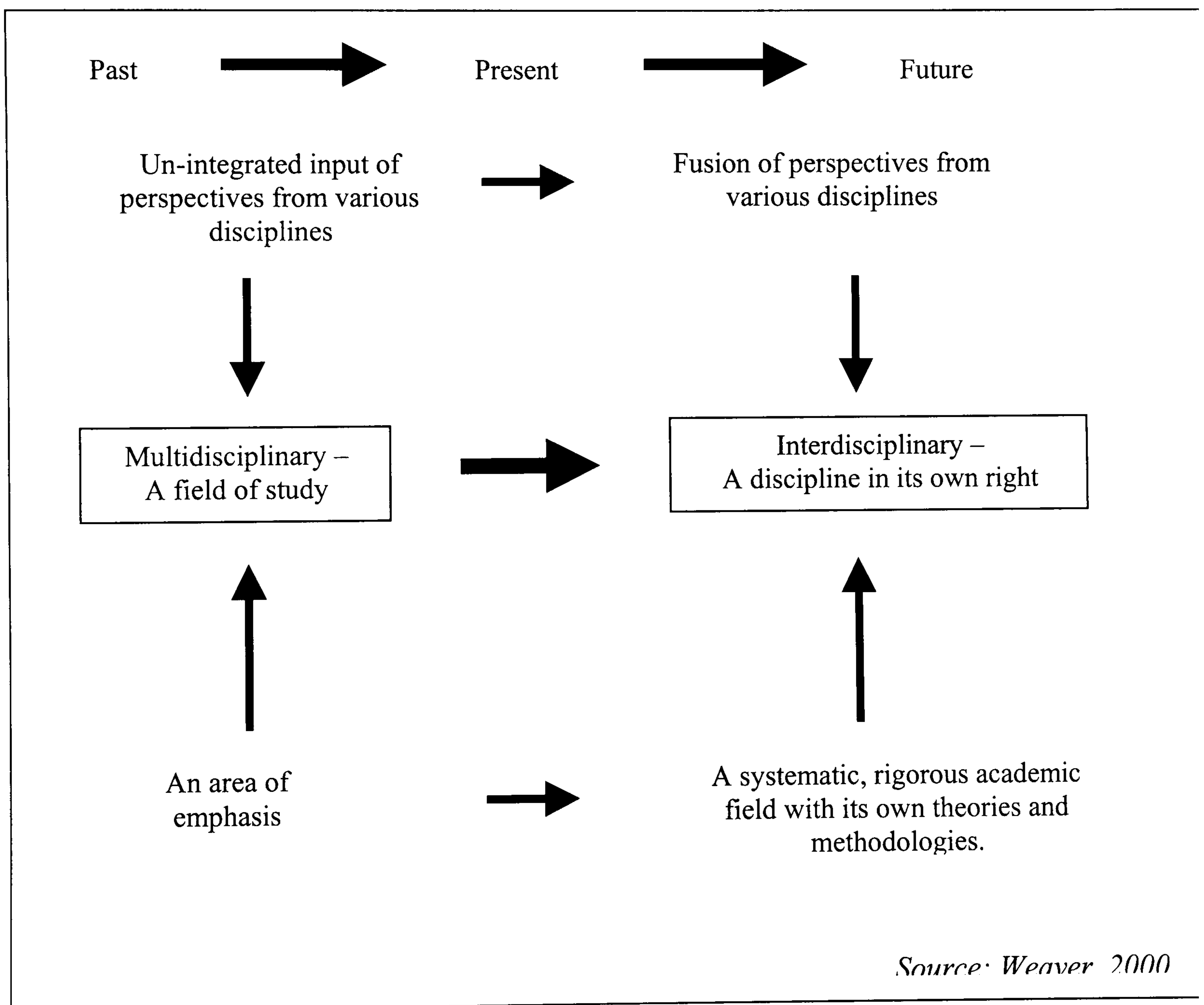
The first I – *involvement* require the actors and sectors within the tourism discipline to interact amongst one and the other and feel the sense of ownership towards tourism. Successful models like best practices in the USA where academics engage themselves

with the industry or the Swiss model where industry network is enhanced through alumni can be replicated. The second I – *innovation* is something a destination must work on to gain strategic advantage at the present point of product saturation. Venturing into new niche areas like ancestral tourism or drawing the attention of film industry like how Lord of the Rings is helping New Zealand tourism promotion are all innovative and creative measure to create a strong image for a destination. The third I – *infusion* is required from many angles of tourism simply because tourism as a discipline itself is infused. From research practice to cultural pluralism to resource diversity needs connectivity and infusion for tourism image to prosper. The fourth I – *interpretation* is where promotion of a destination image should not be merely left at the stage of an advertisement or a tag line. The message of a destination image should relate to its audience and this relation should reveal and provoke the senses of the audience. And this is what creates the fifth I-*intimacy*. And if a destination image can create the required mood, ambience, and aura; and in short the intimacy between the audience and the destination, the psychological drive alone will trigger the audience to make a visit to the destination. However to make all this possible the sixth I – *ingenuity* is required. Ingenuity refers to the professionalism, skills and knowledge of the subject matter and for this human resources training to create expertise in tourism is required.

## 8.6 Contribution to knowledge

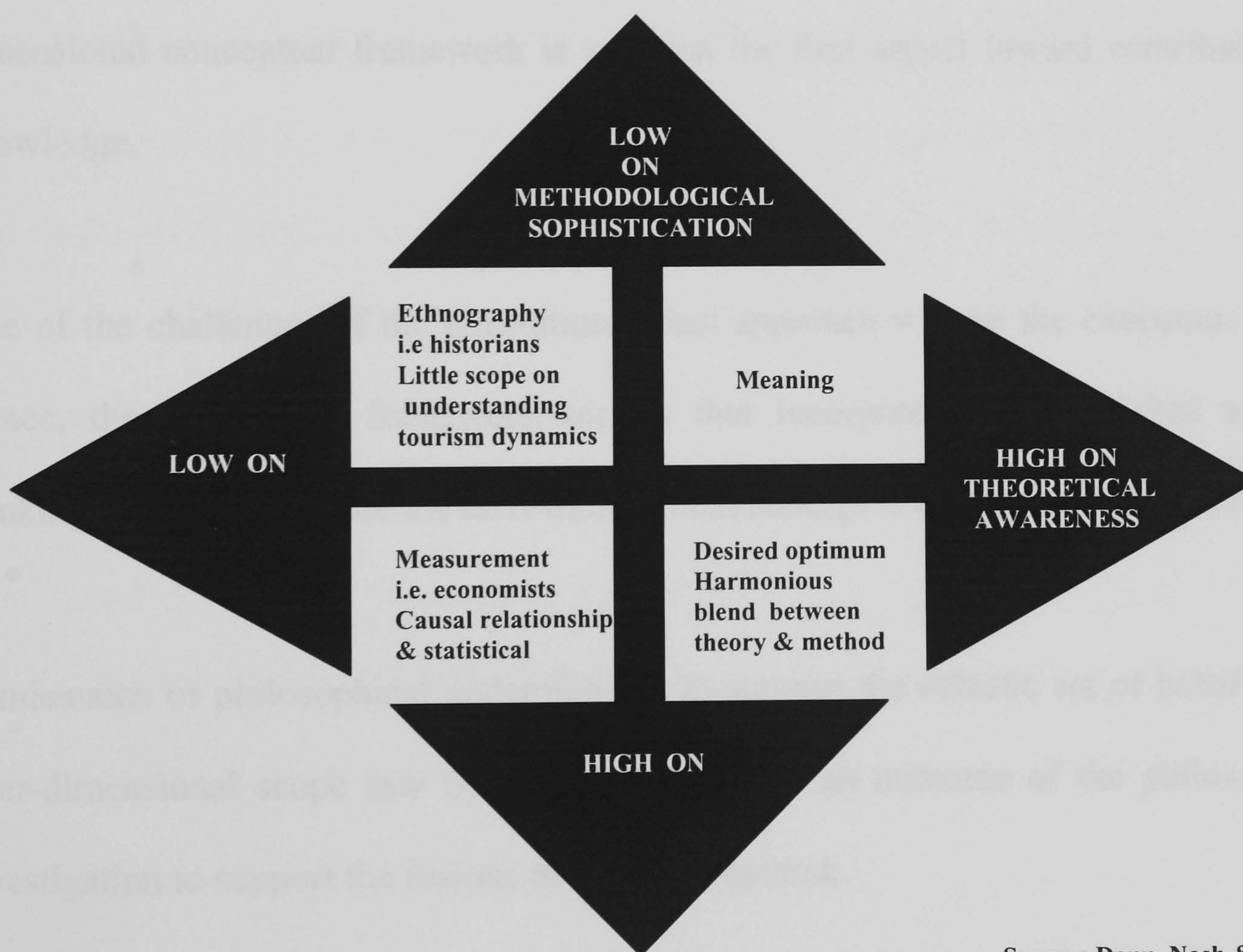
A doctorate in philosophy will be incomplete without contributing to knowledge. A research piece is a challenge not just to test the known and knowable, but also to give equal importance to the unknown and unknowable and this has been the essence of this thesis from the very beginning.

**Figure 8.2 Status of tourism as a discipline**



Especially, to an area like the tourism discipline, which is fairly young as compared to various other disciplines, the challenges faced are to probe into techniques and approaches that could provide the right mechanism to bring forth tourism to be recognised as a discipline of its own rights. These very challenges as highlighted by Weaver (Figure 8.2) and Dann (Figure 8.3) have been an inspiration in my quest to the contribution of knowledge for this piece of research.

**Figure 8.3 Tourism methodological sophistication and theoretical awareness**



Source: Dann, Nash & Pearce

The essence of both figures is that a fusion is required if tourism is to be recognised as a discipline of its own right. Based upon this inspiration and the general aim of this thesis, the key contributions can be addressed from theoretical and practical viewpoints.

### **8.6.1 Theoretical contribution**

At a conceptual framework level, imagery relationship normally is discussed from either a tourist angle or tour operator angle and to a further extent the formation process. The gap had been to bring these components together from an inter-dimensional viewpoint; that is not only from the viewpoint of certain actors and sectors but as overlapping, layered and interconnected dimensions. The formation of this inter-dimensional conceptual framework is amongst the first aspect toward contributing to knowledge.

One of the challenges of the inter-dimensional approach will be the execution phase. Hence, the operational framework section that incorporated a networked systems thinking process to execute the inter-dimensional concept is a contribution by itself.

A mismatch of philosophical underpinnings to support the eclectic set of belief of the inter-dimensional scope saw Synergistic Holism as an outcome of the philosophical investigation to support the fusions of imagery research.

### **8.6.2 Practical contribution**

Having established an appropriate philosophical underpinning, this made it possible in the analyses chapters to look beyond tourists, beyond visual image and beyond a one-dimensional approach; hence fusion of methods, actors, sectors and domains as per the conceptual and operational framework was made possible.

With a sound systemic approach, the study context of the case destination imagery of Malaysia definitely is a contribution at least from a Malaysian tourism angle.

Contribution to knowledge if not made available to public access and being criticised and given feedback by fellow researchers within the field will not know of its strengths and its flaws. Therefore, in this PhD process, the contribution to knowledge also took the form of translating this work into peer reviewed international conference papers that covered the topics such as destination image methodology/philosophy (Ramachandran, 2002), destination image exploratory study (Ramachandran, 2003), destination image operational framework (Ramachandran, 2004c) and destination image analyses (Ramachandran, 2004a & 2004b). I hope these contributions will act as building blocks to further strengthen the effort of making tourism as a discipline with its own rights.



## 8.7 Reflexivity and study limitations

This section will discuss of my research experience and how this PhD process has contributed to my evolution as a researcher. The most important realisation to me is the fact that to learn one must unlearn. This means I shall not cling on to the comfort zone that I have acquired throughout the years that had conditioned my mind. This had been the initial limitation I had and the toughest challenge to overcome. The imposed positivism learning during my earlier days of education prior to embarking on PhD did not help my situation. The philosophical debates and the philosophical journey I experienced during the initial phase of the PhD process assisted me in understanding a broader scope of how reality is perceived. My philosophical thinking accepted the fact that reality need not necessarily be structured and numerically tested. In a social setting like tourism, where the relationship is about man (the various actors) and environment, a more flexible, grounded and first hand experience with the subject being studied is required if reality is to be understood. However, at this point, I was overwhelmed by the phenomenological school of thought and was faced with the challenge of drawing the right balance between positivism and phenomenology. The right balance was required simply because in the real world both school of thoughts exist. Tourism is a discipline unlike pure sciences or pure arts. Tourism is a combination and amalgamation of both sciences and arts. The tourism actors use both worldviews to make decisions. Therefore, in order to understand the holistic aspect of my tourism study: *Destination Imagery*, I envisaged *Synergistic Holism* as my philosophical underpinning for this thesis that gives priority to reality over rules. This philosophical

underpinning may come under criticism by those who hold strong to singular worldview; either positivism or phenomenology. However, my stance is that Synergistic Holism allows the use of mixed method techniques to answer reality. And this can be done without having to feel awkward simply because a researcher's set of beliefs denies the application of certain techniques. Here, I would like to emphasise that I respect of the fact of the existence of various worldviews and people having a certain set of beliefs. However, my request to those who hold strongly to a specific worldview will be: 1) to unlearn their conditioned minds to expand their horizons to view reality from new perspectives and 2) if the first request seems too daunting a task, at least appreciate, accept and respect the fact that reality comes in many forms. Having probed the philosophical aspects, my following challenge was to execute the envisaged philosophical underpinning to empirical reality.

A triangulation approach for methodological fusion was adopted to improve soundness and to reduce limitations. However, a number of limitations that aroused made it difficult for certain gaps to be addressed. Future research can consider and incorporate these gaps that had emerged. The contextual nature of this thesis coupled with the resources limitations within a PhD process have played a role on why some of the following issues were not possible.

Firstly, it is important to highlight that the contextual piece of this thesis has given a high emphasis on philosophical underpinnings that eventually translates these

philosophical thoughts into empirical actions. My reason for probing into the philosophical underpinnings prior to moving on to the empirical assessment is due to the reason that the field of tourism itself as not being wholly recognised as a sound discipline (Dann, 1988 : Weaver, 2000). Although, previous attempts had been made to combine methods to add rigour in research there had always been a gap at a philosophical level, which undermined integration that eventually puts tourism in the vicious cycle of having an ambivalent image as a discipline. Therefore, I felt it would do no justice if the philosophical component was not given due recognition for a degree in doctorate of philosophy.

However, the sponsorship timeframe plus the limited financial resources for empirical work had caused some of the limitations in this study. A good example is the empirical work on tourists: have I had the time and money, hiring research assistants and extending the time for my fieldwork would have been possible to carry out my initial research design on the probabilistic sampling approach. However, I had to settle for descriptive statistics, which of course is of no regret due to its capacity to provide richness of data. But the only shortcoming is that what was supposed to be a theory testing exercise in the end turned out to be a theory building exercise.

Another area that would have strengthened the soundness of this thesis but was again limited by time and money is the investigator triangulation. It would definitely have strengthened this study if a focus group had been conducted using the assistance of

different people as moderator. A focus group would also have reduced the researcher biasness query by getting the feedback and views from various group of people. A good example where this exercise could have been carried out is for the analysis of dossiers. However, on the possible query on this thesis on what attempt had been made to reduce researcher biasness, my defence to this is the way this piece had been explicated with detailed reflexivity.

It is evident from the above discussions that Synergistic Holism has its own limitations. The main limitation is self. It is not easy to break away from traditions to form new set of beliefs. Philosophical reading, introspection and above all time is required. PhD is not kind with time especially if a candidate is required to report for duty to the sponsor within a given timeframe. I was required to complete and return within a maximum period of three and a half years. Since time is required for philosophical investigation, the timeframe for empirical work becomes lesser. Accepting various worldviews as opposed to a single worldview adds on to the workload. Application of single worldview can disregard elements that are not appropriate to its' set of beliefs. However, this cannot be done with Synergistic Holism. Hence adapting a single worldview definitely has its advantages in terms of time frame required to carry out a research. Hence, it becomes a difficult task to carry out various empirical studies in a short period of time all by one person. In short, limitation of time, finance and the fact that PhD is a lonely process makes Synergistic Holism a real challenge to achieve.

However, having gone through this process, I have immense feeling of fulfilment and satisfaction that I would not have attained had I adapted a singular worldview merely as a requirement to complete this PhD process. Having gone through this process and with hindsight, I would definitely handle this research process in a different manner if I were to conduct one in future. Firstly, I will improve on both my time management and timing of the empirical work. Knowing the difficulty of carrying out an empirical study abroad, I will make sure that the research is conducted at a venue that is easily accessible and does not cost a lot both in terms of time and finance. Secondly, avoid low seasons where getting sufficient response rate becomes an uphill task. Thirdly, having gained the philosophical insights, explore and if possible prepare the design principles in advance so that more time is available for empirical work. I hope that the above self-reflection that had been the learning curve of this thesis acts as a point of reference for future research.

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# APPENDIX 1

## **Survey to Assess Malaysia's Tourism Destination Image Amongst British Tourists**

**A project undertaken by the University of Strathclyde in the United Kingdom and Putra University in Malaysia, in association with the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board(MTPB). The aims of this project are:**

- **To understand the needs, wants and demands of British Tourists travelling to Malaysia.**
- **To assess the quality of service delivered by the tourism industry.**
- **To identify the difference between perceived and actual tourist experience with regards to the promised service delivery.**
- **To develop a competitive destination image (CDI) model for Malaysia.**

**As a visitor to Malaysia you will have valuable insights, which can assist us to achieve the project aims. We would greatly appreciate it if you could spend some time answering questions about Malaysia as a tourism destination. This survey should take around twenty minutes to complete. We have tried to make it as 'user friendly' as possible.**

**Last but not least, our sincere gratitude to Berjaya Air for the resource assistance provided to accomplish this study.**

**Thank you.**

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**A satisfactory destination visit depends on the various aspects of the tourism industry such as attractions, facilities, services and management policies in a visitors' tourism experience. In the questions below we will ask you to indicate your view on Malaysia's performance as a tourism destination.**

**\* Please hand in the completed questionnaire to the cabin crew. Alternatively you may choose to mail the completed questionnaire to the above mentioned address.**

## PART 1: THE ATTRACTIONS

For each factor listed below, please indicate one of the following for how attractive you think Malaysia is

1	Attractiveness of climate for vacation	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
2	Features/Scenery	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
3	Flora and fauna (eg, animals, birds, forests)	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
4	Historic/Heritage sites including museums	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
5	Artistic and architectural features	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
6	Traditional arts	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
7	Variety of cuisine	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
8	Unspoiled nature	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
9	Special events/festivals	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
10	Amusement/Theme parks	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
11	Water based activities (eg, swimming, surfing, boating)	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
12	Entertainment (eg, theatre, galleries, cinemas)	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
13	Nature based activities(eg, jungle trekking, bird watching)	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
14	Adventure activities (eg, rafting, skydiving)	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
15	National parks, including nature reserves	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
16	Night life (eg. bars, discos, dancing)	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
17	Exotic atmosphere	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
18	Adult entertainment	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
19	Alcohol availability	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure

20	Filming locations	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
21	Sandy beaches	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
22	Crowdedness in attractions is well managed and distributed	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
23	Liveliness/Busy/Exciting	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
24	Technology advancement	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
25	Fake products (i.e. leather products, pirated VCD/DVD)	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
26	Restful/relaxing	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
27	Attractiveness of cities	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
28	Extent of commercialisation	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
29	Degree of urbanisation	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
30	Uniqueness of small towns	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
31	Authenticity of tourism experience	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
32	Wide open spaces	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
33	Quality of merchandise	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
34	Attractive as a family holiday destination	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
35	Children friendly activities	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
36	Originality of tourism experience/products	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
37	Cultural precincts/Heritage (Folk) villages	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure

## PART 2: HEALTH AND SAFETY

For each factor listed below, please indicate one of the following for how safe you think Malaysia is

1	Malaysia is a clean destination (e.g. litter)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
2	Sanitation practice is excellent (e.g. waste disposal, water quality)	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
3	Food and drinks are prepared with high hygiene standards	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
4	Malaysia is politically stable to attract tourist.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
5	Racial prejudice between locals and tourists does not exist.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
6	Racial prejudice amongst local ethnic groups does not exist.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
7	Malaysia is safe from terrorist activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
8	Overall, Malaysia is a safe place to visit.	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

## PART 3: FACILITIES

For each facility listed below, please indicate how excellent or terrible you think Malaysia is

1	Accommodation variety	<input type="checkbox"/> Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
2	Accommodation quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
3	Airport quality	<input type="checkbox"/> Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
4	Tourist guidance and information	<input type="checkbox"/> Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
5	Diversity of shopping experience	<input type="checkbox"/> Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
6	Food services facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
7	Visitor accessibility to natural areas	<input type="checkbox"/> Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
8	Convention facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

9	Recreation facilities (i.e. parks, horse riding)	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
10	Sports facilities (i.e. golf, tennis)	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
11	Health/medical facilities to serve tourists	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
12	Banks and currency exchange facilities	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
13	Children/Baby facilities (e.g. feeding room)	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know

#### PART 4: COMMUNICATION/TRANSPORTATION

For each of the communication/transportation factors listed below, please indicate of what you think Malaysia is

1	Excellent telecommunication system for tourists (e.g. telephone, fax, internet)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
2	Availability of flights to Malaysia is quite frequent	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
3	Flying time to Malaysia from country of origin is bearable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
4	Flight routes to Malaysia from country of origin are excellent (e.g. direct/indirect flights)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
5	Use of e-commerce in tourism industry is fascinating. (e.g. purchase of flight ticket via internet)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
6	Use of information technology by tourism firms is commendable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
7	Excellent communication between Tourists and locals. (e.g. ability to speak English)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
8	Local tourism transportation quality is excellent.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
9	Customs/immigration officers are friendly and helpful	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
10	Hospitality/friendliness/receptiveness of locals towards visitors are satisfying	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
11	Malaysia is well promoted as a tourism destination in the United Kingdom	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know

12	Malaysia is well promoted of its specific tourism activities (e.g. F1, islands, beaches, rainforest)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
13	Community involvement for special events is excellent (e.g. The Commonwealth games)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
14	Malaysia has strong socio-economic links with the United Kingdom (e.g. business, sports, ethnic ties)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
15	Good links between Malaysia and travel trade (e.g. Thomas Cook promoting Malaysian tourism)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know

**PART 5: SERVICES**

For each of the tourism services listed below, please indicate of what you think of Malaysia

1	Tourism firms gather feedback to understand tourists' service needs	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
2	Capabilities of front line staffs of tourism/hospitality firms	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
3	Efficiency of customs/immigration	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
4	Capabilities of managers of tourism/hospitality firms	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
5	Tourism/hospitality firms having well defined performance standards in service delivery	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
6	High standards of service quality in the tourism industry is practiced	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
7	Tourism service providers willingness to assist tourist at the first instance	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
8	Ongoing tourism development in response to visitor needs	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
9	Packaging of destination experiences for visitors	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
10	Malaysia's tourism image promoted/portrayed meets the actual tourists' experience	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
11	Overall quality of tourism/hospitality services	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know

## PART 6: VALUE FOR MONEY

For each factors listed below, please indicate of what you think of Malaysia as a value for money destination

1	Excellent value for money in domestic tourism packages	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
2	Excellent value for money of shopping items	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
3	Excellent value for money for international flights	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
4	Excellent value for money in accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
5	Excellent value for money in domestic travel	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
6	Excellent value for money for alcohol purchase	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
7	Excellent value for money for meals	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
8	Overall Cost/ Price levels is very attractive	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

## PART 7: MANAGEMENT POLICIES

For each factors listed below, please indicate of what you think of Malaysia's management policies to support tourism

1	Difficult to obtain visa from Malaysian immigration	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
2	Strong government support/commitment to tourism development	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
3	Public sector recognises the importance of 'sustainable' tourism development	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
4	Private sector recognises the importance of 'sustainable' tourism development	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
5	Malaysia's National Tourism Organisation has good reputation for attracting visitation	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

**How would you rate Malaysia's overall image as a holiday destination?**

Terrible   
  Poor   
  Satisfactory   
  Good   
  Excellent   
  Don't know



**PART 8: EXPERIENCE & DECISIONS**

1. Is this your first trip to Malaysia?

a) Yes

b) No\*

\*If no, how many times have you been to Malaysia before this trip?

a) 1 -2  b) 3-5  c) 6-9  d) more than 9

2. What is the nature of your visit?

a) Organised tour  b) Independent leisure travel  c) Visiting relatives and/or friends   
d) Business trip  e) Educational trip  f) Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

3. How long was your stay in Malaysia? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Which of the following(s) influenced your visit to Malaysia?

a) Travel brochure  b) Friends/Relatives in destination country  c) Tour operator   
d) People who have visited destination before  e) Internet/website  f) Magazines/newspaper   
g) Friends/relatives  h) Travel agent  i) Library  j) Tourist/travel guides(book)   
k) Organised information night on destination  l) Television programme  m) Past experience   
n) Tourist information centre  o) Word of mouth  p) Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Malaysia exceeds my expectation.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

6. Malaysia is worthwhile recommending to others.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

7. I would visit Malaysia again.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

8. The theme "Malaysia Truly Asia" is appropriate to represent Malaysia as a holiday destination.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

9. What was your total expenditure in Malaysia for this visit? \_\_\_\_\_

10. What are the places that you have visited during your stay in Malaysia?

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11. What features of Malaysia do you think should be emphasized to improve the image of the country as tourist destination? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Which destination do you think is most similar to Malaysia? \_\_\_\_\_  
In what way? \_\_\_\_\_

13. For each country/destination please list the first FIVE words that come to mind:

A) MALAYSIA :I) \_\_\_\_\_ II) \_\_\_\_\_ III) \_\_\_\_\_ IV) \_\_\_\_\_ V) \_\_\_\_\_

B) THAILAND :I) \_\_\_\_\_ II) \_\_\_\_\_ III) \_\_\_\_\_ IV) \_\_\_\_\_ V) \_\_\_\_\_

C) SINGAPORE :I) \_\_\_\_\_ II) \_\_\_\_\_ III) \_\_\_\_\_ IV) \_\_\_\_\_ V) \_\_\_\_\_

D) INDONESIA :I) \_\_\_\_\_ II) \_\_\_\_\_ III) \_\_\_\_\_ IV) \_\_\_\_\_ V) \_\_\_\_\_

E) HONG KONG: I) \_\_\_\_\_ II) \_\_\_\_\_ III) \_\_\_\_\_ IV) \_\_\_\_\_ V) \_\_\_\_\_

**PART 9: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

1. Gender a) Female  b) Male

2. Age a) 16 – 24  b) 25 – 44  c) 45 – 54  d) 55 – 64  e) 65 – 74  f) 75 and over

3. Where do you live in the UK? a) England  b) Scotland  c) Wales

d) Northern Ireland  e) Elsewhere (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your ethnic group?

a) British  b) White & Black Caribbean  c) White & Black African

d) White & Asian  e) Indian  f) Pakistani  g) Bangladeshi

h) Caribbean  i) African  j) Chinese  k) Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Occupation a) Administrative  b) Professional  c) Manager /Self-employed

d) Manual worker  e) Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

6. What is your highest academic qualification? a) Postgraduate  b) First degree

c) Higher National Diploma/Certificate  d) School leaving qualification

7. Marital Status a) Single (never married)  b) Married (first marriage)  c) Re-married

d) Cohabiting  e) Separated  f) Divorced  g) Widowed  h) Same sex couple

- 8. Family type** a) Single pensioner  b) Pensioner couple  c) Couple with children   
d) Couple without children  e) Single with children  f) Single without children

**9. Gross monthly household income**

- a) 500-1000 pounds a month  b) 1001-2000 pounds a month   
c) 2001-3000 pounds a month  d) 3001-4000 pounds a month  e) above 4000 pounds

If you wish to make a comment you are encouraged to do so. Please write in your comment here:

To understand the services required by tourists and the service delivered by the tourism industry.  
To develop a competitive destination management system for Malaysia.  
As an important information and service provider for tourists to Malaysia, you will have valuable insights, which are essential to the success of the project. We would greatly appreciate it if you could provide your own assessment of the quality of your services with regard to Malaysia as a tourist destination. This survey should take around twenty minutes to complete. We have tried to make it as user friendly as possible.

Thank you.

A. Ramachandran

Project Leader

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Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is much appreciated. Results of this survey will be available upon request.

## **Survey to Assess Malaysia's Tourism Destination Image from the Perspectives of Service Providers.**

A project undertaken by the University of Strathclyde in the United Kingdom and Putra University in Malaysia, in association with the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board(MTPB). The aims of this project are:

- To understand the influencing attributes that motivates travel decisions to Malaysia
- To understand the service required by tourists and the service delivered by the tourism industry.
- To develop a competitive destination image (CDI) systems for Malaysia.

As an important information and service provider for tourists to Malaysia you will have valuable insights, which can assist us to achieve the project aims. We would greatly appreciate it if you could spend some time answering questions about your services with regards to Malaysia as a tourism destination. This survey should take around twenty minutes to complete. We have tried to make it as 'user friendly' as possible.

Thank you.

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**A satisfactory destination experience depends on the various aspects of the tourism industry such as attractions, facilities and services.**

**In the questions below we will ask you to indicate your views on what you think of Malaysia.**

**Please mail the completed questionnaire using the return envelop provided.**

## PART 1: THE ATTRACTIONS

For each factor listed below, please indicate one of the following for how attractive you think Malaysia is

1	Attractiveness of climate for vacation	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
2	Natural Features/Scenery	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
3	Flora and fauna (eg, animals, birds, forests)	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
4	Historic/Heritage sites including museums	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
5	Artistic and architectural features	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
6	Variety of cuisine	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
7	Entertainment (eg, theatre, galleries, cinemas)	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
8	Exotic atmosphere	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
9	Sandy beaches	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
10	Crowdedness in attractions is well managed and distributed	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
11	Liveliness/Busy/Exciting	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
12	Restful/relaxing	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
13	Attractiveness of cities	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
14	Authenticity of tourism experience	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
15	Attractive as a family holiday destination	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure
16	Originality of tourism experience/products	Least Attractive	Below average	Average	Above average	Most Attractive	Don't know/not sure

## PART 2: HEALTH AND SAFETY

For each factor listed below, please indicate one of the following for how safe you think Malaysia is

1	Malaysia is a clean destination (e.g. litter)	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
2	Food and drinks are prepared with high hygiene standards	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Malaysia is politically stable to attract tourist.	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
4	Malaysia is safe from terrorist activities	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
5	Overall, Malaysia is a safe place to visit.	Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>

## PART 3: FACILITIES

For each facility listed below, please indicate how excellent or terrible you think Malaysia is

1	Accommodation variety	Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
2	Accommodation quality	Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
3	Airport quality	Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
4	Tourist guidance and information	Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
5	Diversity of shopping experience	Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
6	Food services facilities	Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
7	Visitor accessibility to natural areas	Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
8	Convention facilities	Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
9	Recreation facilities (i.e. parks, horse riding)	Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>
10	Sports facilities (i.e. golf, tennis)	Terrible <input type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know <input type="checkbox"/>

11	Health/medical facilities to serve tourists	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
12	Banks and currency exchange facilities	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
13	Children/Baby facilities (e.g. feeding room)	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know

### PART 4: COMMUNICATION/TRANSPORTATION

For each of the communication/transportation factors listed below, please indicate of what you think Malaysia is

1	Excellent telecommunication system for tourists (e.g. telephone, fax, internet)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
2	Availability of flights to Malaysia is quite frequent	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
3	Flying time to Malaysia from country of origin is bearable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
4	Flight routes to Malaysia from country of origin are excellent (e.g. direct/indirect flights)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
5	Use of e-commerce in tourism industry is fascinating. (e.g. purchase of flight ticket via internet)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
6	Use of information technology by tourism firms is commendable	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
7	Excellent communication between Tourists and locals. (e.g. ability to speak English)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
8	Local tourism transportation quality is excellent.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
9	Customs/immigration officers are friendly and helpful	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
10	Hospitality/friendliness/receptiveness of locals towards visitors are satisfying	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
11	Malaysia is well promoted as a tourism destination in the United Kingdom	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
12	Malaysia is well promoted of its specific tourism activities (e.g. F1, islands, beaches, rainforest)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know

13	Community involvement for special events is excellent (e.g. The Commonwealth games)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
14	Malaysia has strong socio-economic links with the United Kingdom (e.g. business, sports, ethnic ties)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
15	Good links between Malaysia and travel trade (e.g. Thomas Cook promoting Malaysian tourism)	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know

**PART 5: SERVICES**

For each of the tourism services listed below, please indicate of what you think of Malaysia

1	Capabilities of front line staffs of tourism/hospitality firms	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
2	Efficiency of customs/immigration	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
3	Capabilities of managers of tourism/hospitality firms	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
4	Tourism/hospitality firms having well defined performance standards in service delivery	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
5	High standards of service quality in the tourism industry is practiced	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
6	Tourism service providers willingness to assist tourist at the first instance	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
7	Packaging of destination experiences for visitors	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know
8	Malaysia's tourism image promoted/portrayed meets the actual tourists' experience	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
9	Overall quality of tourism/hospitality services	Terrible	Poor	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent	Don't know



## PART 6: VALUE FOR MONEY

For each factors listed below, please indicate of what you think of Malaysia as a value for money destination

1	Excellent value for money in domestic tourism packages	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
2	Excellent value for money of shopping items	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
3	Excellent value for money for international flights	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
4	Excellent value for money in accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
5	Excellent value for money in domestic travel	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
6	Excellent value for money for alcohol purchase	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
7	Excellent value for money for meals	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
8	Overall Cost/ Price levels is very attractive	<input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Undecided <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know

**How would you rate Malaysia's overall image as a holiday destination?**

Terrible   
  Poor   
  Satisfactory   
  Good   
  Excellent   
  Don't know

**PART 7: EXPERIENCE & PERCEPTIONS**

1. Have you been to Malaysia? a) No  b) Yes\*

*\*If yes, how many times have you been to Malaysia?*

a) 1-2  b) 3-5  c) 6-9  d) more than 9

2. Malaysia is a 'must visit' destination.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

3. The theme "Malaysia Truly Asia" is appropriate to represent Malaysia as a holiday destination.

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

4. What features of Malaysia do you think should be emphasised to improve the image of the country as tourist destination?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Which destination do you think is most similar to Malaysia? \_\_\_\_\_

*In what way?* \_\_\_\_\_

6. For each country/destination please list the first FIVE words that come to mind:

A) MALAYSIA :I) \_\_\_\_\_ II) \_\_\_\_\_ III) \_\_\_\_\_ IV) \_\_\_\_\_ V) \_\_\_\_\_

B) THAILAND :I) \_\_\_\_\_ II) \_\_\_\_\_ III) \_\_\_\_\_ IV) \_\_\_\_\_ V) \_\_\_\_\_

C) SINGAPORE: I) \_\_\_\_\_ II) \_\_\_\_\_ III) \_\_\_\_\_ IV) \_\_\_\_\_ V) \_\_\_\_\_

D) INDONESIA :I) \_\_\_\_\_ II) \_\_\_\_\_ III) \_\_\_\_\_ IV) \_\_\_\_\_ V) \_\_\_\_\_

E) HONG KONG: I) \_\_\_\_\_ II) \_\_\_\_\_ III) \_\_\_\_\_ IV) \_\_\_\_\_ V) \_\_\_\_\_

**PART 8: YOUR AREAS OF BUSINESS**

**1. How do you offer the following destinations (please indicate as appropriate)?**

	DO NOT OFFER	OFFER AS PART OF A PACKAGE	OFFER AS A SEPARATE DESTINATION	Approximate contribution to your total revenue
USA				%
Europe				%
Rest of the world				%
Far East				%
Of which: Malaysia				%
Thailand				%
Singapore				%
Indonesia				%
Hong Kong				%

**2. Approximately what percentage of your total operating revenue accrues from the following areas?**

Independent Holidays _____%	Inclusive holidays _____%
Business _____%	Study _____%
Visiting friends/relatives _____%	Other _____%

**3. Do you feature Malaysia in any of your promotional literature?**

a) No                       b) Yes\*

\* If yes, how much control do you personally have over image of Malaysia that your literature promotes?

a) Complete control                       c) Shared – majority of control   
 b) Shared – minority of control                       d) None

**If you do not possess complete control who else possesses control?**

---

**4. Please indicate the nature of your business.**

a) Tour operator                       b) Travel agency                       c) Both

**PART 9: BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP**

**1. Our organisation receives excellent support from the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**2. Our organisation's commitment in promoting Malaysia is high in priority.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**3. Our organisation has close ties with the inbound tour operators in Malaysia.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**4. Our organisations preferred airlines for our clients travelling to Malaysia is the Malaysian Airlines.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**5. Our organisation uses the information and communication technology (i.e. internet, website, e-commerce) substantially in promoting Malaysia.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**6. Our partnership with the accommodation (i.e. hotels and resorts) sector in Malaysia is excellent.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**7. The food and beverage industry in Malaysia is highly commendable.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**8. Our partnership with the travel and transportation sector within Malaysia is excellent.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**9. The attractions in Malaysia have strong selling advantage.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**10. Rewards and remunerations for our organisation in selling/promoting Malaysia is very satisfying.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**11. Our organisations' overall business-to-business relations with Malaysian counterparts are excellent.**

Strongly disagree  Disagree  Undecided  Agree  Strongly agree  Don't know

**PART 9: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE**

**1. Gender**    a) Female     b) Male

**2. Age**        a) 16 – 24     b) 25 – 44     c) 45 – 54     d) 55 – 65     e) 66 and over

**3. Please indicate your job title:**

a) Owner                       b) General Manager                       c) Operations Manager   
d) Sales consultant     e) Marketing director                       f) Other

**4. Please indicate the number of years you are working for this organisation.** \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to make a comment you are encouraged to do so. Please write in your comment here:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is much appreciated. Results of this survey will be available upon request.