Tourism and Development in Singapore (Tourism as an Instrument for Development)

Joan C. Henderson
Chapter 8

TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN SINGAPORE

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Abstract: Singapore has seen success as an international destination with a steady rise in arrivals since the city-state became an independent republic in 1965. Tourism development is part of a broader program of economic and physical centralized planning which has transformed the island. The government has been very active and its pro-tourism policies have created an infrastructure and supply of attractions which render the country a center for leisure and business tourism. One element of the strategy has been constant upgrading and investment aimed at revitalization and sometimes reinvention. However, the authorities are facing unprecedented challenges due to general development pressures. Changing circumstances will demand a reappraisal of tourism policies and underlying assumptions. Keywords: Political economy, Singapore, development, urban planning

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines tourism policies in Singapore within the context of more general development strategies and considers past experiences and future prospects. The country is a distinctive destination and political entity, because of its defining characteristics as a relatively young city-state of
restricted geographical area and natural resources, coupled with a history of colonization and a multiethnic population. Economic successes have been achieved in the post-independence era, during which it has established itself as a leading center for leisure and business tourism within the Asia Pacific region, under the government of a single party. International tourism is lauded by officials as a pillar and driver of the economy and appears to have been stimulated by a growing economy, but the extent to which it is responsible for this growth is uncertain. Challenges have confronted the authorities in their endeavors to secure sustainable growth in terms of tourism and more widely and are set to intensify as competition mounts, the population expands, and pressures increase on already scarce land. These topics are discussed in the case study which affords insights into tourism development processes, underlying dynamics and management approaches. Questions are also raised about limits to tourism growth and policy implications.

**THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT**

Any discussion of development issues in Singapore cannot overlook the political background and the dominance of the People’s Action Party, formerly led by Lee Kuan Yew. The party has been in power since independence, although there is a new generation of leaders and the Prime Minister is now Lee’s son. The government is renowned for the pursuit of order and control and political legitimacy in this system of “top-down paternalism” is derived from “exemplary economic management” (The Economist, 2013, p. 3) which has given citizens one of the highest standards of living in Asia. It has also laid the foundation for and determined the character of the tourism industry. There has, however, been a decline in electoral support for the People’s Action Party attributed to anxieties about the future which has prompted promises of a more responsive and accountable government. In the international arena, Singapore has demonstrated pragmatism and engaged with the rest of the world through free trading and representation on various organizations. The state has thereby acquired soft power out of proportion to its size which is manifest in a reputation for sound and stable government (Chong, 2010). These qualities have been exploited as tourism selling points, endowing Singapore with a competitive edge in South East Asia, and are reinforced by images of a safe and well-organized city. Tourism is both an expression and instrument of globalization and a means of enhancing the regime’s status at home and abroad (Henderson, 2012a).
As well as shaping economic and physical landscapes in the manner discussed later, the government has endeavored to mold society and culture. With a population in excess of five million, Singapore is one of the world’s most densely inhabited cities. The presence of over one million workers from overseas has become a contentious matter in a time of economic doubts when the populace is worried about job security; nevertheless, migrants often occupy positions shunned by Singaporeans, including those in the hospitality sector. Government is aiming to reduce dependence on foreigners, but appreciates they are essential to the functioning of the economy and is warning residents of the dangers of xenophobia. The citizenry comprises ethnic Chinese (74%), Malays (13%), Indians (9%), and others (Department of Statistics, 2012a). Race is carefully managed with a ban on race based parties and promotion of meritocracy. Tensions persist and nation building has involved attempts to define and cultivate a Singaporean identity which both celebrates and transcends ethnic affiliation (Kong, 2000), mirrored in messages communicated to tourists of harmonious multiculturalism. Destination marketing depicts a society and culture in accordance with official visions (Chang & Teo, 2001) so that tourism becomes a vehicle for what Ooi (2002, p. 701) terms a “social engineering agenda”. A thriving tourism industry also allows residents access to a wider choice of cultural activities, thus enriching society as a whole (Chang, 2000).

General Development and Planning

Singapore consists of a main island and several small offshore islands at the southern tip of the Malayan Peninsula, to which it is linked by a causeway. Reclamation, now reaching its limits, has enlarged the land area from 682 to 712 square kilometers. The former British colony was given self-government in 1959 and joined the Malaysian Federation in 1963. When Singapore was expelled from the association in 1965 due to political differences, its survival was questionable. The new republic was to prosper, however, due to a pro-business strategy which facilitated exports and foreign investment. The country has amassed enviable reserves and emerged as a prominent Asian business and financial hub. According to the World Economic Forum (2011), Singapore can be categorized as having reached the third and final development stage labeled innovation-driven. Second only to Switzerland, its institutions are assessed as the best for efficiency and the country is praised for its education provision and freedom from corruption. It has an open economy and scores highly in global surveys of ease of setting up and doing business, being ranked first by the
World Bank (World Bank Group, 2013). Commercial opportunities have been seized on by hotel firms, for example, and international chains are well represented.

Achievements have rendered Singapore something of a model (Yusif & Nabeshima, 2012) with annual GDP growth rates averaging 8% from the 1960s to the 1990s, although the figure subsequently fell to 5%. Not all commentators have been impressed and, writing in the 1990s, Krugman (1994) attributes Asian tiger booms such as Singapore’s to exceptional resource mobilization and inputs of machinery, infrastructure, and education. He argues that crucial efficiency improvements are missing, leading to inherent unsustainability. There are other reservations about heavy reliance on international trade and foreign capital and companies (Siddiqui, 2010) which make Singapore sensitive to external market movements and inhibit local firms (Shin, 2005). This vulnerability applies to tourism; nevertheless, a buoyant economy has been a stimulus for business travel, meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibition travel and domestic demand for leisure products while enabling generous public spending on tourism development.

Economic advances have been accompanied by physical transformation into a city which contrasts dramatically with that of 1965 (Kong, 2012). The government initially requested United Nations assistance, leading to the State and City Planning Project in 1967 (Chew, 2009) and setting a pattern of centralized urban planning. The guiding “Concept Plan”, dating from 1971 and reviewed every year, spans a 10–15-year period and is designed to ensure both economic growth and a good quality living environment (URA, 2013a). Most land is state owned and zoned for use, permitting control over tourism-related functions. Emphasis has shifted over the years as the country has progressed, but the 2001 Concept Plan’s core themes of housing, recreation, business, transport, and identity (URA, 2013b) are recurrent and echoed in the 2011 review which also highlights sustainability (URA, 2010a, 2010b). Under the plans, traditional settlements and agricultural land have largely disappeared due to urbanization and industrialization. Much of the population was re-housed in government built apartment blocks in satellite towns erected across the island. The coastline has been reconfigured, mangrove swamps replaced by artificial beaches, and rivers turned into canals. Nature areas are designated (Chua, 2012), but artifice frequently intrudes and the natural environment has generally been subdued; sometimes for leisure and tourism purposes as in the instance of the River Safari, the latest attraction in the comparatively more rural north of the island which houses the Singapore Zoo and Night
Safari. The winning design is that of a “boat ride with a freshwater aquarium” based on the Amazon River (Wildlife Reserves, 2013).

More recent statements articulate aspirations to be a technologically advanced and sustainable global city which inspires feelings of belonging and where natural and cultural heritage are cherished (Government Monitor, 2010). Clean and green motifs are pervasive, in accordance with long standing notions of a garden city or city in a garden. A metropolis of this sort is attractive to tourists so that urban planning and policy objectives coincide, with heritage in various guises conceived of as an economic asset. It also has a sociocultural value, engendering sentiments of rootedness. There is a formal commitment to conservation on the part of the Urban Redevelopment Authority, the agency which deals with both planning and conservation and reports to the Ministry of National Development, and selected structures and areas are protected. However, economics usually takes priority in decisions about land, property use, and the survival of built heritage. What remains of the natural environment is precarious with individuals and groups lamenting the destruction of sites of significance to personal and collective memories (Henderson, 2012b).

The Concept Plan informs economic planning, conducted under the auspices of the Economic Development Board, in which the government has been closely involved since independence. It has sought to offset deficiencies of space and natural resources by focusing on the country’s human capital and infrastructure with a series of strategic plans aimed at maximizing opportunities and promoting growth (Economic Strategies Committee, 2010; MTI, 2013). Preferred industries have changed with the times, but services as a whole have assumed greater prominence. A committee in the mid-1980s reported that they deserved the accolade of pillar of the economy, equal to manufacturing. The idea was reiterated in a 1998 competitiveness committee report and employment in the sector rose to 74% in 2001 from 64% in 1986. Tourism was acknowledged as the fourth best performing component after the financial sector, logistics, and information communications technologies, but ahead of education, healthcare, and law (MTI, 2003). Its importance at the beginning of the new century is reflected in the formation of a Tourism Working Group by the Economic Review Committee set up in 2001 (Tourism Working Group, 2003) and the expansion described later in this chapter confirmed the stature of tourism as a key industry. Overall, it is estimated that travel and tourism’s direct contribution to Singapore’s GDP was 5% in 2011, or 10% when indirect benefits are included. It accounted for 9.7% of jobs directly and indirectly, 3.3% of exports, and 20.2% of investment (WTTC, 2012b).
Tourism in Singapore

International arrivals in Singapore have kept pace with economic development, rising steadily from one million in 1973 to six million in 1993, but the upward movement has sometimes been interrupted. Table 1 shows the pattern for the last decade and the dips in 2003 and 2008–2009 which occurred in reaction to the SARS virus and financial crises, respectively. Recovery appeared underway in 2011 which was a record year with over 75% of tourists hailing from the rest of Asia. Leading markets are neighboring Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as Mainland China, Australia, and India. A majority of all tourists arrived by air, and length of stay averaged 3.7 days, with almost one-third traveling for business purposes (Department of Statistics, 2012b; Euromonitor, 2012; STB, 2013a). While residents are a source of custom for many tourism and hospitality businesses, domestic tourism is constrained by Singapore’s geography as well as easy accessibility to nearby countries with a greater wealth of natural and cultural heritage.

The government has a history of supporting tourism (Tan, Yeoh & Teo 2001; Teo & Chang, 2000) in conformity with its development agenda and commencing in the 1960s when the construction of four luxury hotels in the city center was approved, leading to the formation of a tourist belt. A 1970s investment program resulted in attractions such as the small offshore island of Sentosa which was to become a leisure playground furnished with appropriate facilities. The opening of Changi Airport in 1981 and the emergence of Singapore Airlines, a government linked company, as a premium

Table 1. International Arrivals and Expenditure (2001–2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number in Millions</th>
<th>Expenditure S$ (US$) in Billions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>9.4 (7.6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>8.8 (7.1)</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.9 (5.6)</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9.8 (7.9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>10.9 (8.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>12.4 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>14.1 (11.4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>12.4 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>18.8 (15.2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>22.2 (17.9)</td>
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carrier furthered the country’s ambitions to be a transport hub and gateway. An US$808 million (SS1 billion) Tourism Product Development Plan was announced in 1986 to nurture a new tourism landscape, encompassing culture- and nature-based attractions which were often a component of more comprehensive schemes, such as the revitalization of the Singapore River. Historic districts associated with the colonial period and ancestral cultures were recognized for their actual and potential tourism interest and awarded conservation status (Henderson, 2005).

A declining growth rate in the mid-1990s precipitated fears of stagnation and fresh strategies were devised such as Tourism 21 in 1996 which targeted 10 million arrivals by 2000. This was to be achieved by redefinition and reformulation of tourism products and space as well as greater collaboration (STPB, 1996). Tourism facilities were upgraded and fresh attractions fostered, but the 7.69 million tourists in 2000 fell short of the target. Arts and cultural tourism were in the spotlight by the end of the 20th century, complementing endeavors to nurture the creative industries which also had their own Economic Review Committee working group, and Singapore was envisaged as a Renaissance city and global city of the arts (MITA, 2000; MITA & STPB, 1995). Progress toward this end was signified by the opening of the US$481 (SS595) million Esplanade-Theatres on the Bay complex, yet Ooi (2008) asserts that the positioning is at odds with restrictions on freedom which frustrate artistic expression and creativity. Tourism 2015 was launched in 2005 and fixed goals of 17 million arrivals, US$4 (SS30) billion receipts and an extra 100,000 jobs over the following 10 years. Initiatives to promote business, leisure, and education and healthcare tourism were backed by a US$1.6 (SS2) billion “Tourism Development Fund” to be spent on stimulating infrastructure, commercial capability, event-hosting, and product innovation in cooperation with private enterprise (STB, 2005). It appeared, however, that the 2015 targets were overambitious in view of the economic turbulence which reverberated around the world and impacted adversely on international tourism.

The second half of the decade saw several major projects underway or nearing completion. Work started on a new cruise terminal and the airport opened a third terminal in 2008, with a fourth terminal planned for 2017 to increase capacity to 82 million passengers (Changi Airport, 2013). Among new attractions were a giant observation wheel, ultramodern shopping malls, and two resorts integrating casinos with accommodation and other facilities. The last were made possible by a controversial revoking of the ban on casinos which was justified on the grounds of their capacity to generate income and employment, especially through tourism (Lee, 2005). Costing
developers over US$4 (S$5) billion each, the resorts were conceptualized as “iconic lifestyle destinations”; one is aimed at business travelers and the other, containing a Universal Studios theme park, at families (STB, 2006a, 2006b). These amenities, together with occasions such as the Singapore Formula 1 Grand Prix inaugurated in 2008, were intended to cultivate an image of fun and excitement which would subvert stereotypes of somewhere rather dull and regimented (Ooi, 2011). They are not without their critics, notably the casinos due to fears about problem gambling. Opponents are not reassured by the imposition of a strict regulatory regime, including a prohibition on advertising in Singapore, and pledges about responsible gaming by operators. Certain events and entertainments are also censured for their exclusivity, with prices beyond the reach of ordinary Singaporeans.

As well as adding to physical plant, there have been attempts to improve service quality. Awards, certification, and vocational training for tourism and hospitality workers (WDA, 2013) have been introduced, alongside tertiary education courses. Marketing has evolved in parallel with tourism offerings and become more sophisticated since earlier days when Instant Asia was among the slogans. The current brand is entitled “Your Singapore” and purports to be an “energetic and fresh proposition, providing travelers with a brand new perspective on visiting Singapore” (STB, 2010). China and India, judged to have better prospects than more mature economies, are now a focus of much marketing effort. Responsibility for tourism lies with the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) which presents itself as the industry’s “leading economic development agency”, championing tourism as a central driver and pillar of the economy. Working with the private sector, the STB engages in strategic planning directed at consolidating Singapore’s position as a primary Asian center for leisure, business, healthcare, and education services. The STB is well funded and assorted grants and financial incentives are available to stimulate enterprise (STB, 2013b).

**Summary of Tourism Policy**

This study indicates how Singapore has sought to exploit its strengths of stability and security, an educated and English-speaking workforce, international connectivity, and multiculturalism. It has striven to reposition itself as a destination in reaction to market trends which has necessitated revitalization and reinvention, albeit in ways not always convincing. Policies to date have been firmly pro-tourism in pursuit of an increase in international arrivals through the provision of a modern and efficient infrastructure and appropriate and ever-changing inventory of amenities and attractions.
Government has intervened and spent heavily, as well as acted as a catalyst for private investment. Tourist volumes and revenues over the last 10 years, despite occasional setbacks, can be interpreted as a sign of the strategy’s effectiveness. Indeed, Singapore was rated the most competitive destination among the ten-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and 10\textsuperscript{th} in the world in 2012 when its scores for policies and regulations, prioritization of tourism, ground transport infrastructure, and human resources were particularly high (World Economic Forum, 2012).

The idea that tourism can fuel economic growth which underlies the official stance is one espoused by governments worldwide, although empirical data is ambiguous (Oh, 2005). Studies of the European islands of Cyprus and Malta (Katircioglu, 2009a, 2009b) are inconclusive, but Kim, Chen and Jang (2006) argue that the hypothesis is supported in the case of Taiwan. There is some evidence to endorse the claim in Singapore (Lee, 2008) with Katircioglu (2011, p. 452) positing a situation of long-term “unidirectional causality”. Earlier studies also conclude that the tourism industry has played an increasingly significant role in Singapore’s economic development (Diamond, 1979; Schymck, 1983; Seow, 1981). More recently, the government calculated that the integrated resorts earned 1.5–2% of GDP and employed 2% of the total labor force in 2011 (Henderson, 2012c). At the same time, the transformative power of tourism should not be exaggerated and Singapore’s economic trajectory is the outcome of multiple interconnected forces. This industry has certainly benefitted from development, but the degree to which it has been a cause is a moot point. Analysts are still debating the complexities of the relationship between tourism and growth and the efficacy of the former as an economic development tool (Lee, 2012; Lee & Chang, 2008). Some warn about over-reliance and, even if multiplier values are relatively high in Singapore, leakages are likely due to the small and open economy (Khan, Chou & Wong, 1990).

Beyond the economic domain, Singapore’s international tourism has had repercussions for society and the environment which are other facets of sustainable development. Whether these are positive or negative is also debatable and critics have complained about excessive commercialization of culture for tourist consumption (Ismail, Shaw & Ooi, 2009), although what exactly constitutes a Singaporean culture is a topic of ongoing discussion in a country perhaps still on the journey to nationhood. Singapore’s profile as a cosmopolitan and crowded metropolis with a global orientation and highly urbanized landscape also suggests that international tourists are more easily absorbed and less intrusive than they might be in other types of destination. The ability of tourists to induce sociocultural and environmental
change is thus confined; the modernization often attendant on tourism development in South East Asia has already occurred, accompanied by depletion of the natural environment and dilution of ancestral cultural traditions.

In terms of community participation, a top-down approach prevails in tourism as in all other policy arenas (Ooi, 2012); there are mechanisms for consultation, but feedback has not always been acted on. However, the STB now seems to favor a lighter touch in the development of its delineated tourism precincts, such as the Orchard Road shopping stretch and historic ethnic quarters of Chinatown and Little India where local business associations are urged to take the lead as place managers (STB, 2011). Currently the Board is emphasizing its intention of maximizing spending and yield rather than volume (Euromonitor, 2012). “Tourism Compass”, one of the latest exercises in collaboration, was informed by the deliberations of a Tourism Consultative Council overseeing five taskforces with members drawn from the public and private sectors. Citizens were also invited to offer their ideas about the future of Singapore’s tourism (STB, 2009). The emergent directional vision is of “quality tourism, with strategies that draw on a better market understanding, deeper industry engagement and partnerships, value creation and product innovation and rejuvenation” (STB, 2012, p. 6). An additional US$731 (S$905) million was allocated to the Tourism Development Fund in 2012, with one-third to be expended on luring events, conferences, and exhibitions. The remainder will be divided between product innovation and tourism enterprise capability enhancement, including training (Channel News Asia, 2012). The success of these plans remains to be seen and, in the longer term, policies and their implementation will be influenced by conditions prevailing in the wider environment. Recent reports suggest that Singapore as a nation will confront formidable dilemmas in the forthcoming decades which will impinge on tourism and its development directly and indirectly.

Looking Ahead

The government has predicted that Singapore’s population will be within the range of 6.5–6.9 million by 2030, depending on demographic factors, global and regional circumstances, and economic and social trends. Citizens and Permanent Residents are expected to number between 4.2 and 4.4 million, the former accounting for around 86% of this total, and the remainder made up of foreign workers who will be subject to strict entry rules. Retaining a core Singaporean population with a strong sense of self
and providing it with a good quality of life, encompassing suitable job opportunities, is agreed to be daunting in light of such statistics. The task is compounded by an aging population, low birth rates, emigration of young people, and projected fall in average annual GDP growth rates to 2–3% in the decade after 2020. The formal answer lies in improved efficiency and productivity, greater innovation, and harnessing of technology (NPTD, 2013). An associated land use plan outlines a development strategy to allow population growth while safeguarding the living environment and making Singapore “one of the most livable cities in the world” (MND, 2013, p. 4). It talks of protecting Singapore’s role as a financial, business, and high-end manufacturing center and of unspecified economic restructuring by 2030 in order to sustain competitiveness (NPTD, 2013). The extra 5,600 hectares of land needed will be made available through reclamation, utilization of reserve land, and recycling of land with low density use such as golf courses. Underground expansion is to be explored and a National Innovation Challenge on Land and Livability will pursue solutions to the problems of land shortage and optimal usage.

The plan acknowledges the importance of built heritage and celebrating and preserving the past, yet future development requirements must not be compromised and “practical and innovative ways” to retain links to history are called for (MND, 2013, p. 20). Due regard will be given to arts and culture, alongside sports, in the future city and there is a commitment that the existing proportion of around 10% of land will remain allocated to greenery. The Singapore of 2030 is described as a “vibrant city, comprising eco-friendly districts and towns, rich in heritage and culture” (MND, 2013, p. 66). Whether this vision will become reality is a topic of speculation and the publication of the population and land use documents precipitated an unusual amount of popular discussion and dissent in Singapore. Many were fearful about overcrowding, particularly on already stressed public transport services, and the threat to the identity and livelihood of Singaporeans posed by the foreign worker population.

Tourism is not covered in the land use plan, but clearly there are ramifications for the operation of the industry and tourist experience. The official portrayal of Singapore in the years ahead implies a destination appealing to visitors, yet there must be concerns about exceeding the number of tourists the island can comfortably accommodate. More arrivals are forecast for the region (UNWTO, 2011) and Singapore businesses will no doubt endeavor to secure a share, backed by policymakers anxious for revenues which will help to perpetuate the growth depicted as vital to survival. Enlarged populations of tourists and residents and mounting pressures on infrastructure
and space, however, may make it difficult to maintain existing standards of efficiency and deliver the accustomed level of service. Resentment over foreign workers could spill over to tourists and mar the welcome they receive. Much natural and cultural heritage has given way to modernization in the past and there is a risk of more losses, further eroding authenticity and identity. The political climate is another factor to consider and there is a possibility of a stronger civil society and opposition parties challenging the dominance of the People’s Action Party. Such happenings could frustrate the more efficacious aspects of the long-term planning which has characterized Singapore and results from what has been an essentially one-party system, affecting economic development and tourism policymaking and its execution.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has explored the Singapore government’s approach to tourism development and the imperatives underlying its supportive and interventionist policies within the framework of the country’s evolution. The authorities are motivated by the desire to realize the financial returns from tourism and a perception that it can help economic growth through income and job creation. Tourism is additionally employed as a vehicle for the articulation and affirmation of identity, allied with the nation building efforts of a young multiracial country. It is instrumental in international diplomacy and foreign affairs and these diverse applications have a hegemonic dimension whereby the assorted advantages of tourism, including a positive destination image, are flattering to the ruling regime. Although unique, Singapore demonstrates what can be achieved by small states lacking natural assets and conventional attractions. The style of government and some outcomes have detractors, but it has produced impressive economic growth and modernization alongside recognition as an international tourism center. Singapore’s case is instructive for other destinations, affording lessons about the merits of coherent long-term policymaking and planning, conditions of safety and security, and infrastructure investment. Also revealed is the importance of an active National Tourism Organization which engages in creative marketing and product innovation, backed by a government which prioritizes tourism.

At the same time, tourism has shortcomings as an industry which may constrain its roles as an economic pillar and driver and policy decisions are
not without their weaknesses. Domestic activity in Singapore is circum-
scribed and overseas markets have shown themselves vulnerable to forces
such as financial downturn, outbreaks of infectious disease, and terrorism.
There is resistance among Singaporeans to working in the hospitality sector
and its productivity is relatively low. Hotels depend on foreign labor which
is increasingly in short supply as regulations are tightened. The attractions
base is narrow and compares unfavorably with much better endowed coun-
tries in the region. Reliance on large scale attractions and events may prove
disadvantageous as these can be replicated and surpassed by competitors.
Cultural heritage endows places with a uniqueness which sets them apart
and is appreciated by tourists, but tangible evidence is becoming hard to
find in Singapore when national identity is somewhat amorphous. These
circumstances seem likely to persist and the next two decades will be a
formidable test for Singapore’s tourism authorities and of government
competence overall. The possibility and desirability of maintaining past
momentum against a background of internal and external change over the
next 20 years are questions which must be addressed, together with and
connected to those related to the search for sustainability. The dilemma
faces all successful destinations, but is especially acute in Asia’s rapidly
growing urban centers without Singapore’s history of planning. The idea
of limits to the growth of tourism, once an abstract concept, is an urgent
reality and will require reassessment of development policies and the place
of tourism. Whether Singapore will remain a model of good practice in
terms of tourism and more general economic management is something for
researchers of the future to determine.
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