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# Is infrastructure able to support tourism growth?

THE Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is enhancing the local tourism industry again. There are warnings that things will not be as rosy as before, and more local products are needed. STB is also trying to attract more high-spending visitors.

We have heard these stories before, in previous campaigns such as "New Asia - Singapore" and "Uniquely Singapore".

There is little doubt that STB will eventually deliver. But what lessons have we learnt from before?

The first is that Singaporeans are generally very welcoming and tolerant of visitors.

Considering that there are more than twice the number of tourists visiting Singapore in a year than the population on the island, local residents know the importance of the industry, notwithstanding the inconveniences, such as the overcrowding of Orchard Road and the "touristification" of Chinatown.

The second is that Singapore is a playground for both visitors and locals.

Without tourists, we would not have the River Safari or the Gardens by the Bay.

Orchard Road would not be so lively.

With new museums, exhibitions and performances, our cultural scene would not have grown at such speed without the support of visitors.

Tourism has shaped Singapore society at many levels.

The third is that tourism also brings about concerns. For instance, after the controversial introduction of casinos in Singapore, many residents are still lamenting the social costs of gambling.

With the pursuit of getting more tourists to visit our country, and of constantly shaping our society to be tourist-friendly, what criteria are used by the authorities to ensure that the growth and plans will continue to get the support of Singaporeans?

Will our infrastructure be able to support the relentless growth of visitor numbers? Is there a sustainable tourism plan?

Without doubt, STB deserves a round of applause for keeping the Singapore tourism product fresh, and maintaining tourism growth.

Local residents should also be recognised and be appreciated for their support and hospitality.

There is, however, no guarantee that the constant growth trajectory of the industry will not overstretch the infrastructure of the island and the goodwill of the people.

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