

Factors Influencing Sustainable Community based Tourism (CBT) among the Indigenous People of Lambir, Sarawak

Ripin Lamat, Shazali Johari, Puvaneswaran Kunasekaran

Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to understand the role of community as an important player for community-based tourism in rural areas. Although government's initiatives are evident, the sustainability of the development is questionable. In this paper, attributes from previous research of local communities' attitude were reviewed and linked to construct a model within the scope of community tourism. This study is deductive in nature where descriptive statistics used to measure the relevant dimensions. As a result, two themes were measured to have significant contribution in determining local community's perception on community tourism. This finding can be used in determining sustainable tourism practice which will be focused on participation and empowerment aspects.*

Key words: *community tourism, perception, sustainability*

I. INTRODUCTION

Although the Community Based Tourism in Malaysia has been introduced and presumably promoted for more than 15 years by the Ministry of Tourism, many of these CBT kampungs (villages) are finding it difficult to sustain. Apart from the more established 'model' CBT kampungs, such as Kampung Banghunis in Selangor, Kampung Desa Murni in Pahang, Kampung Relau in Kedah and Kampung Sarang Buaya in Johor, most of the others in several states have lost their ability to sustain, notwithstanding the fact that more are being encouraged to join the bandwagon. Although many of the CBT projects have been funded through public and private sources and with the involvement of several key stakeholders, the success rate of these projects has not been monitored and reported. As a result, the actual benefits and impact of the CBT programme on the local community are not easily ascertained (Ismail, 2010).

One of the factors that have contributed to the loss in sustainability is the homogenous nature of the Malaysian CBT programmes. Croes (2006) pointed out that homogeneity of tourism product offerings could be a problem for small competing CBT destinations. According to him another factor could be their lack of scale economies. Kunasekaran (2013) observed that in several destinations, the tourism industry in general is characterised by the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

quoting Buhalis (1996) that the SMEs deliver a variety of benefits for the destinations by providing tourists direct contact with the local character and also by facilitating rapid infusion of tourist spending into the host community, stimulating the multiplier effects and quoted Anandkumar (2007) that they also contribute significantly to the range, variety, authenticity and quality of the 'tourism experience.' Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert, & Wanhill (2005) argued that at the micro-level, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) tend to be disadvantaged owing to their lack of scale economies in both supply and demand. Some cross-national alliances have taken cognisance and built collaborative networks to derive scale economies. However, this collaboration was not adopted as a long-term strategy and seems to have lost its significance. Considering the significance of the CBT programme to rural community development, the need to conduct a holistic research is imperative (Kunasekaran, 2011). There has been research done in the past relating to CBT programmes and other factors that illustrate community development in the CBT villages but these are limited to selected states in Malaysia.

Most of the research done in the past was to measure the satisfaction level of tourists with the services provided by the CBT operators (Ismail, 2010) local community participation in the implementation of the CBT programme (Kayat, 2002) and the current status of the CBT programme implementation in Selangor and Kedah (Ismail, 2010; Yahaya, 2004). Besides, research on community-based tourism is limited globally and its benefits to the local community are not easily ascertained (Ismail, 2010 and Kunasekaran, 2013).

II. METHOD & MATERIALS

This study employs a quantitative approach. The data was collected from Lambir, Sarawak. Snowballing (Cooper and Schindler, 1998) and theoretical sampling (Minichiello, 1991) are the combined selection procedures that will be used to carry out this research.

III. RESULTS

The community development is measured by analyzing dimensions of participation, empowerment, capacity building and self-reliance. The community development indicators are treated as community development outcome, not community development process. Table 1 show the level of community development of the community according to the mentioned dimensions.

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Table 1: Level of community development

Community Development	Indicators	M
Participation	Recognized and valued as an equal partner before any tourism development.	4.17
	Community leader consults the community before taking any decision.	4.12
	Tourism infrastructures in this village developed after consulting with the residents.	3.93
	Tourism program and project procedures are clear and accessible.	3.84
	All community members have the opportunity to participate in tourism.	3.92
	The uniqueness of the community is appreciated in implementation stages.	4.15
	Volunteers valued.	3.30
	The community is well resourced to participate.	3.85
	Understanding, knowledge and skills developed to encourage participation.	3.86
Empowerment	Involved in tourism planning.	3.93
	Tried to improve tourism service.	4.10
	Involved in tourism evaluation and recommend improvement steps.	3.84
	Took part in tourism programs during tourists visit.	4.07
	Encouraged other villagers to participate in tourism.	3.97
	Tried to upgrade tourism knowledge to improve tourism service.	4.11
	Able to make decisions without relying on others.	3.96
	Able to control tourism development in this area.	3.86

Participation is considered as one the important dimensions in the community development measurement which can reveal the state of the community when there is an intervention of an outsider. The above table generally shows that the community is willingly participating in tourism activities and business (3.30 to 4.17) with outsiders or within the community members. They community felt that they are recognized and valued as equal partners by the outsiders (3.94). They also agreed (4.17) that the villagers will be consulted before any tourism developmental projects takes place and the village leader will discuss with the community before taking any decision (4.12). A higher mean value of 4.12 shows that the uniqueness of the community is appreciated in developmental implementation stages. However a different case is experienced by the indigenous community in Lennox Island First Nation. Although the community is involved in tourism developmental programs, they still felt that they were powerless and unable to make key decisions. Slightly lower mean values (3.84, 3.92, 3.30, 3.85, and 3.86) were recorded respectively if tourism project procedures are clear, all community members have the opportunity to participate in tourism, volunteers valued, the community is well resourced to participate and understanding, knowledge and skills developed to encourage participation. The lower values show the absence of genuine participation of the community in the tourism development. The convinced participation will not allow a community to enjoy a holistic community development.

In terms of empowerment, the mean scores recorded are similar to the participation dimension. Many of the respondents agreed that they are involved in tourism planning and tried to improve tourism in their area (3.84 to 4.10). Average mean values were also recorded for ability to make decision without relying on others (3.96) and control the tourism development (3.86). This result shows that they are not fully empowered to make decisions and the decisions are still subject to outsiders' influences. The community however always took part when tourists groups visit them (4.07) and always tried to encourage other villagers to take part in tourism (3.97).

IV. CONCLUSION

The result clearly shows that the community is not playing the key decision making role. This is a normal situation for many indigenous communities because the tourism developmental programs and funding are usually initiated by the outsiders. Thus, the influence of the outsiders is always more that the empowerment of the local communities.

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