

# Bidayuh community’s Social Capital Development towards Sustainable Indigenous Tourism in Sarawak, Malaysia

Shazali Johari, Puvaneswaran Kunasekaran

**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to holistically understand the role of social capital and resources in influencing the sustainable indigenous tourism practice of the Bidayuh indigenous community in Malaysia. Lack of specific study on Bidayuh community and tourism participation has created a significant justification for this study as they are the main stakeholders of the rural setting. This study employs a quantitative approach for data elicitation and analysis. Pearson correlation is used as the statistical analysis to measure the relationship of linking, bridging and bonding of the community towards sustainable tourism practice. Overall, the social capital variables had average and strong relationship with the sustainable indigenous tourism dimensions. The community believe that tourism is a dominant tool to develop social capital. However, they are still dependent on the support of outsiders to develop the social capital.

**Keywords:** Indigenous tourism, social capital, Sarawak

## I. INTRODUCTION

Generally, the indigenous people recognize themselves as being part of a unique public group, originated from groups present in the area before modern states were created and current boundaries described. This rural community also generally maintains cultural and social identities, and social, economic, cultural and political institutions, separate from the mainstream or dominant society or culture. Tourism has been an important industry in Malaysia for a number of years (Musa, 2000) and international arrivals reached 27.44 million and 25.70 million respectively in 2014 and 2015, compared to 5.5 million in 1998 (Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, 2016). Table 1 shows international tourist arrivals to Malaysia and revenues received from 1998 until 2015.

**Table 1: International tourist arrivals and receipts to Malaysia**

Year	Arrivals /million	Receipts /MYR billion
1998	5.5	8.6
1999	7.9	12.3
2000	10.2	17.3
2001	12.7	24.2
2002	13.2	25.8
2003	10.5	21.3
2004	15.7	29.7
2005	16.4	32.0
2006	17.45	36.3

2007	20.9	46.1
2008	22.0	49.6
2009	23.6	53.4
2010	24.6	56.5
2011	24.7	58.3
2012	25.03	60.6
2013	25.72	65.4
2014	27.44	72
2015	25.70	69.1
2016	26.76	82.1

Source: Ministry of Tourism (2017)

Growth rates have averaged around five percent since 2007, but slowed in 2011 due to adverse economic conditions globally. Malaysia's popularity can be attributed to a rich natural and cultural heritage and the diversity of attractions in the different states which make up the federation. The fact that Malaysia is a multi-racial country with Malays, Chinese, Indians and various indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak living and working alongside harmoniously has become a selling point and is heavily used to promote tourism in the country (Malaysia, Truly Asia campaign). However, in these promotion the indigenous community is overlooked (Kunasekaran, 2013).

*“To know Malaysia is to love Malaysia. A bubbling, bustling melting pot of races and religions where Malays, Indians, Chinese and many other ethnic groups live together in peace and harmony.”* (Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, 2016)

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural aspect in indigenous tourism has been a popular research area highlighting the indigenous people and their unique and authentic lifestyle (Kunasekaran, 2015). In this area, commercialization of culture has brought tourism attractions to be targeted especially on cultural celebrations. The culture of each ethnic by indigenous people represents their identity. The development of tourism strongly depends on their ethnicity, heritage and festivals (Butler and Hinch, 2007). The scholars also mentioned that culture has emerged as a powerful attraction not only for tourists but also for entrepreneurs, government agencies and academic researchers.

Tourism emerged as a good way of preserving the Ontario Indian customs and culture, but only if the right people are involved and if tourism does not become a business for some

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Individuals (Besermenji, Milić and Mulec, 2011). Tourism can also help in the promotion and presentation of Indian customs and cultures (Kunasekaran, 2011). This is the way to introduce their culture to the world and thus contribute to its preservation.

**III. METHOD& MATERIALS**

Quantitative approach was used to collect data. The sampling design that was selected for this research was a proportionate stratified random sampling method. It involves a process of stratification or segregation, followed by a random selection of subjects from each stratum (Sekaran, 2002). In this scenario, the Bidayuh households of Krokong-Tringgus villages were selected. According to the Department of Statistics, the total Bidayuh population of the Krokong-Tringgus villages amounted to 11,000 people in the year 2013. Thus, the total sample size that must be collected is 372 with a confidence level of 95% (Raosoft, 2013). To get the correct proportion of each

village, according to the population, 15 % (372/11000\*100) of respondents should be selected.

**IV. RESULTS**

**A. Level of Bonding**

The concepts of bonding, linking and bridging were jargon words for the respondents in the rural area of study. Thus, the researcher explained the meaning of it to each respondent during the survey to avoid misconception and confusion. Table 4.7 below shows the descriptive analysis of bonding, out of 319 respondents, only 4 (1.3%) of them were reported having low level of bonding, 215 (67.4%) were having moderate level of bonding and 100 (31.3%) of the respondents have high level of bonding. Based on the mean score of 20.98 and standard deviation of 2.35, the result indicated that there was high level of bonding among the respondents. This showed that majority of the respondents attained high level of bonding.

**Table 2: Level of Bonding (n = 319)**

Levels	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Low (6 – 14)	4	1.3	20.98	2.35
Moderate (15 – 22)	215	67.4		
High (23 – 30)	100	31.3		

**B. Level of Bridging**

The descriptive analysis in Table 4.8 revealed that, 198 (62.1%) of the respondents have moderate level of bridging and 121 (37.9%) have high level of bridging. Thus, the

finding indicated that there was moderate level of bridging among the respondents by looking at the mean score (M = 31.68, SD = 3.11). This means majority of the respondents have achieved high level of bridging.

**Table 3: Level of Bridging (n = 319)**

Levels	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Low (13 – 30.33)	–	–	31.68	3.11
Moderate (30.34 – 47.66)	198	62.1		
High (47.66 – 65)	121	37.9		

**Level of Linkage**

Table 4.9 have shown that, 194 (60.8%) of the respondents were in moderate level of linkage and 125 (39.2%) were having high level of linkage. In line with the mean score (M = 61.38, SD = 3.55), the result indicated that the majority of the respondents have moderate level of linkage.

**Table 4: Level of Linkage (n = 319)**

Levels	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Low (17 – 39.66)	–	–	61.38	3.55
Moderate (39.67 – 62.32)	194	60.8		
High (62.33 – 85)	125	39.2		

**V. CONCLUSION**

The initial investigation shows that the indigenous community is proud to portray their culture to the outsiders. They are also proud to be known as the icon of tourism among other communities of Malaysia. This study also reveals that the community is eager to explore tourism opportunities in their village. They strongly believe that the tourism business can create many positive outcomes. Apart from that, the community also agrees that the non-economic benefits such as cultural sustainability and environmental sustainability are driven by the emergence of tourism in their village. The results also clearly show that the community is very much open to outsider and encourage any tourism development efforts in their area. Tourism is perceived as a strong tool to connect them to the outside

world. Existence of tourism in their area not only enabled governmental, non-governmental and inter-ethnic affiliations, but also direct international exposure to the community.

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