

The Influence of Community Attachment and Community Involvement Towards Resident's Support on Sustainable Tourism Development by Mediating Perceived Benefits and Perceived Costs

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Abstract: This study was seeking to understand the influence of community attachment and community involvement towards the resident support on sustainable tourism development with the mediation of perceived benefits and perceived costs. Using a quantitative approach, a total of 172 respondents involved in data collection in two different research sites in Sabah. Community attachment and community involvement were set as the independent variables whereas perceived benefits and perceived costs are the mediators while resident support is the dependent variable. The study suggested that community attachment was mediated by perceived benefits and partially supported. Meanwhile, community attachment mediated by perceived costs is fully supported. Community involvement mediated by perceived benefits and perceived costs and both are fully supported. The study also suggested that perceived costs had significant and positive effect on negative relation. The findings of this study confirmed that community attachment and community involvement have significantly influenced the resident support towards sustainable tourism development. Therefore, community attachment and community involvement are to be focused in order to gain support from local resident in developing sustainable tourism development.

Key words: Sustainability • Sustainable Tourism • Community Attachment • Community Involvement

INTRODUCTION

Social capital has been interposed into the policy process recently. It emphasizes the underappreciated and undeveloped communities, to facilitate the sustainable development implementation phases. It encourages, at the same time, for grassroots democratic process based in generalized reciprocity and trust, social networks, collaboration and local autonomy. Thus, community is a vital role in this sustainable tourism development plan [1].

On the contrary, it is found that local community participation is missing from the development process in most less-developed nations while they are reviewing the national tourism plans. It is also argued that many plans can be best described as 'tokenism', a policy of formally complying with efforts to achieve a goal by making small, token gestures [2].

In terms of benefits, tourism scholar strongly believed that the community-based tourism strategy is crucial for several reasons. Such as, it generates job

opportunities and steady income for the locals and raises the living standards of community residents while simultaneously benefits the growth of both regional and national economics. Secondly, it makes residents stakeholders by improving the local infrastructure, facilities, services as well as their skills, benefiting support from tourism industry. Next, it supplies the local resident with incentives and revenues for the conservation for all natural, historical and cultural assets. Fourthly, it builds a sense of community in the resident to contribute to local cultural identity. And lastly, it encourages niche tourism intensely, one of the most rapid growing sectors in the international tourist market, particularly in cultural tourism.

A successful tourism development not only depends on positive encounters between tourists and hosts, but in the long-term success of tourism is dependent on locals and their support for tourism [3]. However, not all locals are willing to support in this development due to negative impacts possibly higher than positive ones.

On the other hand, although residents may benefit from tourism income, jobs and tax revenue, they react negatively toward such factors as tourism-related congestion, environmental degradation and noise. Nonetheless, the support of local residents may be critical to tourism sustainability, because the conservation behaviour of residents may be necessary in sustaining the environmental resources that attract tourists.

The purpose of this study is to examine the level influence of community attachment and community involvement toward resident support on sustainable tourism development mediating by perceived benefits and perceived costs. This study will focus on the level of resident support in Kota Kinabalu., Sabah.

The variables in this study are community attachment and community involvement (as the independent variables), perceived benefits and perceived costs (as the mediator) and resident support toward sustainable tourism development (dependent variable). All the variables applied in this study were adopted from previous empirical study that examined the resident support level in sustainable tourism development.

Literature Review: A sustainable tourism must be maintained in terms of economy, environment and socio-culture. Involvement of environment is crucial as part of tourism resources from the dimension of both quality and variety. Ecotourism that has been introduced in recent year acts as a solution to help protect both ecological and cultural resource. At these ecotourism sites, local economic opportunities emerged and also provide greater environment awareness to travellers.

While stakeholder participation in sustainability is not new and the needs for tourism industry has been specifically targeted by governments, local communities that support sustainable tourism has been neglected [5]. Maintaining the sustainability of the tourism is taken into the attention of stakeholders so that the current rich resources can be enjoyed by the next generation. To achieve the goal of sustainability, government with its regulation and community with its obedience and unity are needed.

Community-based tourism helps developed traditional rural industries. Besides that, providing economic benefits, promote host destinations, improving travelers experience and greater environment awareness are some of the few good influences that community-based tourism can contribute at the same time [4]. Without the support and participation of local community, the development of sustainable tourism might be difficult [6].

Community based development is very important as the community themselves have better knowledge about local condition and have better ability to enforce, monitor and verifying best solutions to issues efficiently. Thus, ongoing local community involvement is a critical factor in the sustainable tourism development.

Sustainable development brings mostly good influence such as meeting the needs of tourist, providing working opportunities to local community, enhancing economic growth, protecting tourism sites, creating environment awareness, improving the living standards of the residents through coexistence of tourism and environmental quality [7-9]. Based on this concept, it is believed that if host residents are likely to benefit from such exchanges without involving intolerable costs, they are likely to support and participate in this development plan. On the other hand, if host residents concur that the development incurs more costs than benefit, then they are likely to oppose it [26].

Tourism is often argued for its potential to generate significant revenues for communities and acts as a linkage between rural economic development and conservation [10]. As such, tourism benefits that influence the positive attitude of local communities is meanwhile argued by tourism scholars. Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) is later introduced as an approach to natural resources management and rural development [11]. CBNRM encouraged the spirit of ownership and develop positive attitudes toward the use of natural resources once rural communities participate in natural resource utilization and are able to derive from economic benefits [12].

Community attachment is a multifaceted psychological process that shows the cognitive, affective and domains of a person's attitude, indicated by the literature [13]. The attitudes of the host residents toward their community may be a complex construct of assessment.

Diverse perspectives are provided on the relationship between resident support for tourism development and community attachment of host residents. It is suggested that some tourism scholars have indicated that community attachment affects directly and significantly on their support for tourism development, whereas other scholars did not found significant relationship between them in tourism development [6].

Engaging local community in management and decision-making can convince the community of the need to orient tourism into local economy [8]. Several tourism scholars comprehend benefits and costs as mediating

variables for the support of the development and community attachment and environmental attitude as means supporting their theoretical models [6].

Community involvement can result in shared vision and by focusing on heritage and culture, destination distinctiveness can be achieved [14]. In opposition, it is suggested that tourism planning is a political process, where the needs and demands and diverse number of stakeholders may impact on the ecological, economic and socio-cultural resources [15].

Consideration of adding community participation in the development phases to create attractions that have local identity and meaning and are 'sense of that place' topic to the debate is argued [16][17]. In ensuring social capital to be recognized and that planning becomes part of the social consciousness of the destination, communities are to be involved in the decision making process [9]. The engagement of people and those who generate those values are crucial to the success of visitor centres, given that values are all humanly constructed [18].

In the effort to promote community empowerment, some programs are developed with the aim to make tourism development enjoyed by local community. Community is regarded as subject in development and tourism development is expected inclusive. Some programs have been done such as development of village tourism [19]. Local communities are able to optimize asset usage and resources for economic activities; conservation of culture and village environment will be more maintained [20, 21].

Indirect impact of village tourism event is more important if compared to direct impact [20]. This study is also in line with research done by Bater [22]. With all the direct and indirect benefits, community is expected to participate in tourism activities. Tourism development will not be successful without community leader and all community are involved [23].

Local communities realize the importance of tourism in stimulating social change, culture, environment and economic dimension, where tourism activities have had close relationship with local people [24]. Tourism is just like a tool that is used by community to promote economic development. In conjunction with the issue, community leaders in the area of development are playing an important role in taking care of tourism problem.

Methodology: The research design method used in this study is quantitative research and the research approach has been used in this study is hypothesis

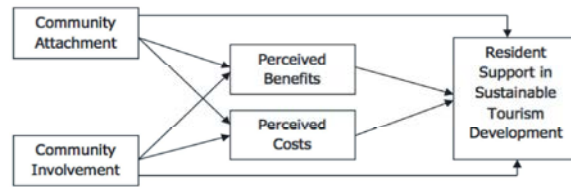


Fig. 1: Research model adapted from Lee (2013)

testing. The purpose of this study is to test the level influence of community attachment and community involvement (independent variable) toward resident support in implementing sustainable tourism development (dependent variable) mediate by perceived benefits and perceived costs (mediator variable) in the context of Sabah (Figure 1).

The type of survey employed in this study is inferential surveys that aimed at establishing relationship between variables and concept. Questionnaire adapted from Lee [4] will be providing as a measurement tool to be distributed to respondents.

Research Design: The hypotheses development adapted for this study are as follows:

- H1: There is a positive relationship between community attachment and resident support in sustainable tourism development.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between community involvement and resident support in sustainable tourism development.
- H3: There is a positive relationship between perceived benefits and resident support in sustainable tourism development.
- H4: There is a negative relationship between perceived costs and resident support in sustainable tourism development.
- H5: There is a positive relationship between community attachment and positive effect on perceived benefits on resident support in sustainable tourism development.
- H6: There is a positive relationship between community attachment and negative effect on perceived costs on resident support in sustainable tourism development.
- H7: There is a positive relationship between involvement and positive effect on perceived benefits on resident support in sustainable tourism development.
- H8: There is a positive relationship between community involvement and negative effect on perceived costs on resident support in sustainable tourism development.

The target respondent for this study is the local residents at selected villages that implemented sustainable tourism whereby this community gets involved and contributed in the tourism development i.e. KampungBavanggazo in Kudat district and BatuPuteh in Kinabatangan district. Unit of analysis will be carried out as individual. Minimal requirement will be at least 18 years old and above where anyone above 18 years is considered an adult; hence the decision to set the age limit at 18 years.

Total of 180 questionnaires were distributed; however only 172 questionnaires were returned. Out of these 172 responses, only 166 questionnaires are usable with response rate of 96.5%. The minimum requirement is to have 5 times the variables and the more the better. The questionnaire has 31 variables (questions) which multiplies with 5 and equals to 155 respondents. Therefore, this study with sample size of 166 is appropriate and acceptable for factor analysis as the requirement with only minimum of 155 respondents [27, 28].

Non-probability technique is applied in this study as sampling technique where the selection is based on the convenience of sampling. However, snowball sampling technique will be added in this research as part of the sampling method. This is because snowball sampling is the most effective strategy to access a small number of residents who would be aware and get involved in the sustainable tourism development from a first-hand perspective [27].

RESULTS

There were 166 respondents in total where 55% were male and the remaining 47% were female. Most of the respondents are married with 86.1%, 12% of respondents remain single and 1.8% of respondents are divorced. Both age 20 and below and 56 and above have the same percentage which is 1.2%, 7.8% at the age range of 21 to 25, 16.8% between 26 to 30 years old, age 31 to 40 consist of 18.6%, 20.4% which is the highest percentage in the age range of 36 to 40, 18% is in between 41 to 45 years old, 46 to 50 years old claimed 9% and lastly 6.6% are in the age range of 51 to 55.

Respondents are from different working and education background. Approximately 60.8% of respondents have their own business, 16.9% working with private sector, 12.7% as housewife, 5.4% work as government servant, 2.4% are students and the remaining 1.8% are unemployed. Meanwhile, in education background, only 3% of respondents are degree holders,

25.9% possessed STPM or College Diploma and the remaining of 71.1% have qualification of SPM or below.

The personal income with highest percentage in the sample was in the range between RM1001 to RM2000 monthly which constitutes of 42.2% of overall respondents. 41% of the respondents earned in between less than RM1000, while 15.7% of the respondents are unemployed and have no source of income. Most of the respondents in this group are students, housewives and unemployed.

The highest monthly salary obtained by respondents in this study is between RM2001 to RM3000, which constitutes of 1.2% out of 166 respondents.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

It is suggested that both community attachment and community involvement has significant findings whereby the hypotheses are positive relationship. Local residents who are involved and attached in this sustainable tourism development at KampungBavanggazo and BatuPuteh are mostly relying on this development program as their primary earnings. Both hypotheses are supported whereby community attachment and community involvement have positive relationship with resident support [4].

Previous studies found out that the perceived benefits positively and significantly influenced the local resident support for sustainable tourism development based on Social Exchange Theory [6]. Whereas perceived costs negatively and insignificantly affect the local resident support for sustainable tourism development [26].

Compared to previous research findings and hypotheses prediction, perceived benefits have positive relationship with resident support; meanwhile perceived costs have negative relationship with resident support. However, in this research, even though perceived benefits remain positive relationship with resident support, yet perceived costs have positive relationship with resident support which contradict with previous research. Perceived benefits have significant relationship with resident support which is aligned with Gursoy's finding in his research [6]. Meanwhile, relationship between perceived costs and resident support is contradicted with Lee's study [4]. Residents' positive and negative behaviours depend on what they received. If a nation has positive effect on perceived costs, then they should agree on it.

Comprehended benefits and costs are used as the mediating variables by many tourism scholars to examine in the accuracy of the forecasting of support for tourism development plan. The significant relationship that community attachment perceived economic benefits, but insignificantly affected social costs, cultural benefits and cultural costs [3].

Out of four hypotheses, only community attachment mediated by perceived benefits that affects the resident support is full mediation. The other three hypotheses are only verified as partial mediation. Fully mediation means perceived benefits will strongly impact on the relationship between community attachment and resident support towards sustainable tourism development. In the partial mediation case, perceived benefits and perceived costs had weak impact on the relationship between community attachment and community involvement on resident support towards sustainable tourism development. Nicholas's study shown consistency where community attachment is fully mediated by perceived benefits on resident support [6]. Simultaneously, findings in Gursoy & Kendall's study also conclude that community attachment is partially mediated by perceived cost on resident support [26]. H7 shows the different result in this study compared with Nicholas' study. However it is accepted [6] and supported by Lee's study where community involvement does not have significant relationship in sustainable tourism if locals do not participate in decision making or planning even when they perceived benefits [4]. This also supported the hypotheses where community involvement is partially mediated by perceived cost in resident support.

This study provides empirical evidence in supporting the relationship between community attachment, community involvement, perceived benefits, perceive costs and resident support towards sustainable tourism development.

The findings of this study confirm that community attachment and community involvement have significantly influenced the resident support towards sustainable tourism development. At the same time, perceived benefits and perceived costs also show the partial and full mediation roles between the community attachment and community involvement and resident support towards sustainable tourism development.

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