COMMUNITY BASED ECO-TOURISM IN HULU RENING AS POTENTIAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN BATANG KALI, SELANGOR

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to study and highlight two elements that can contribute to the development of eco-tourism site which is Hulu Rening, Batang Kali. In order to achieve the goal of this study, it is important to identify the effects of the community’s behaviour and their involvement towards developing eco-tourism. By using qualitative research to emphasize on describing, explaining and understand the discussed topic. Research was conducted through interviews with 30 random selections of the people of Hulu Rening which includes the head of the village while 15 responses were retained for further analysis. The findings of this study identify the effects of social capital and intangible assets within the community of Hulu Rening that contributes towards the development of the area. Their positive values of the people in Hulu Rening can positively help to develop the area into a tourist attraction. However, the study were also able to identify the slight behavioral issues that development planners should not overlook in order to successfully build the area as an eco-tourist location.

Keywords: Eco-tourism, community-based, tourism development, behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual permanent places of residences for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes (World Tourism Organization 2008). Tourism can be domestic or foreign, those travelling from one place to another place within the country can be termed as domestic tourists, whereas, those travelling from one country to another country are termed as foreign tourist.

Eco-tourism is a sustainable form of natural resources-based tourism that focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, and which is ethically managed to be low impact, non-consumptive and locally oriented (control, benefits and scale). It typically occurs in natural areas, and should contribute to the conservation or preservation of such areas (Fennell 1999). Honey (1999) defines eco - tourism as a travel to fragile, pristine and usually protected areas that strive to be low impact and (usually) small scale. It helps educate the traveler; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights. Ceballos – Lascurain (1991), states that eco-
tourism is that tourism which involves travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas.

Eco-tourism can also be seen as a form of nostalgia. For the purposes of this article, eco-tourism means non mass tourism that uses natural aspect of the landscape as its main selling point (Garburn, 1995). Rosaldo (1989) has argued that the market for eco – tourism stems from an ‘imperialist nostalgia’ stemming from that desire by people from developed countries to flee modernity and ‘return to nature’. Eco-tourists eschew large crowds and travel to national and/ or foreign destinations in search of nature, but as with cultural travel, this does now always mean that eco-tourism is sustainable (Russell and Wallace, 2004).

Tourism does not always have to represent globalization or the subjugation of local tourist and the demands of tourism industry. It should however express the control of local people over their futures. This applies to eco-tourism especially when it is based on the community itself. By making a connection between eco - tourism and the local community, the focus can be on opportunities from empowerment.

This article brings Hulu Rening as a potential place in order to champions’ eco-tourism as way for communities to involve and develop it.

**RESEARCH ISSUES**

There are many potential elements to attract tourist and to create the awareness on the uniqueness of nature and environment, so that the community could generate income. There is an image of Kampung Hulu Rening in Batang Kali that are surrounded with natural resources and uniqueness of sense of belonging community that could be experience by the tourist.

This could be a focus point in Kampung Hulu Rening to be a place for eco-tourism and to have the community involve in developing the program since it has the readiness spirit among them as well as if were given a proper training and guidance by the government agencies it could be empower by them.

**AIM OF STUDY**

This research study is to identify the potential areas in Hulu Rening to develop an eco-tourism area and by having the community involvement in it. This study also gives other information regarding the effects towards the community in terms of economic activities is developing the area into eco-tourism. From this it would not only benefit to the community but as well for the state government and also the tourist. This research will be focusing on the intangible assets and social capital in the area of Hulu Rening. The aim of this research is to be able for the community in Hulu Rening to run the place as an eco-tourism attraction plus opportunities for them to generate a better employment and economic. It is also to introduce the area of Hulu Rening that is full of natural resources and to apply it to the activities for the tourists both local and international in order to provide a very unique and enjoyable experience.
RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The framework of research below is as illustrated:

![Conceptual Research Framework](image)

**Table 1: Social Capital Dimension:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Togetherness:</th>
<th>Neighborhood Connection:</th>
<th>Volunteerism:</th>
<th>Trust:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How well people get along</td>
<td>Big/ special events</td>
<td>Have volunteered?</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gotong Royong</td>
<td>Emergency Help</td>
<td>The expectation</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom, Frequently, Always</td>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>Fair contribution</td>
<td>Head Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information and communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>Outsiders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Intangible assets**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Identity &amp; Uniqueness</th>
<th>Cultural Value Preservation</th>
<th>Local Cultural Diversification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>Folklore</td>
<td>Uniqueness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral tradition and expressions</td>
<td>Performing arts</td>
<td>Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>Traditional crafts</td>
<td>Beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brand</td>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social Capital

According to Besser (2009), stated that social capital defined as the relationship between people characterized by trust and norms of reciprocity that can be utilized for individual and collective goal achievement. Putnam (1993) study of democracy, social capital and economic development in Italy, generated tremendous public interest in social capital’s potential for improving quality of life and facilitating civic engagement.

Besser (2009) also stated that social capital has been identified by numerous scholars as an important resource for community improvement. Added by Putnam (2000), trusting relationships between residents characterize town higher levels of voluntarism and involvement and the ability to mobilise residents, in turn, partially explains why town with higher levels of social capital are likely to have greater number of community betterment projects and more effective local government compare to other places.

In contrast with Messner et al (2004), they say that social capital has also been found to be negatively related to crime rates in neighborhoods and positively associated with community economic benefits. Added by Besser (2009), social capital theory predicts that town rich in trusting relationships will be better able to deal with the difficulties posed by economic restructuring. High social capital towns should have more civic engagement, i.e. resident participation in community organisations and projects and higher levels of collective action for the public good.

Flora (1998) mentioned that within the context of development, social capital generally consists of three features: trust, reciprocity and cooperation. Park et al (2012) added that when these three elements are strong within communities, community residents are more likely to be able to take advantage of economic, community- building and capacity – enhancement opportunities. Narayan and Cassidy (2001) also mentioned that social capital has gained wide acceptability as a fruitful theoretical perspective for understanding and predicting the norms and social relations embedded in the social structure of societies. Social capital existed only when it is shared.

Intangible assets

According to Hall (1992), intangible assets are defined as those key value drives whose essence is an idea or knowledge and whose nature can be defined and recorded in some way. Itami (1991) also mentioned that it is known as invisible assets, and includes technology, customer trust, brand image, cooperate culture, as well as management skills.

Mentioned by Svendsen and Sorensen (2007), the existence of intangible assets was in fact recognized by classical thinkers. For example, Hume (1984) suggested that trust, contracts and the possibility of efficient sanctions in case of breach of contract increase economic performance (EP). Added again by Svendsen and Sorensen (2007), intangible assets such as common norms, trust and cooperative skills. They argued that, although invisible to the eye and scarcely measurable, intangible forms of capital involve visible socioeconomic outcomes and should therefore be assessed as production factors of no less importance than tangibles.

Woodhouse (2006), stated that within rural studies, intangible factors have been practically non – existent – except from DORA studies and a certain interest in the concept of social capital. Svendsen and Sorensen (2007), believed that in respect to intangibles, social capital consists of network cooperation based on regular face-café interaction and trust. Furthermore added by Coleman (1990), as a by-product,
cooperation affords societal benefits, such as social trust, low criminality and less state monitoring. Finally Svendsen and Sorensen (2007), define cultural capital as an intangible, in the form of shared local culture and identity, primarily transmitted from parents to children through history.

Support for tourism development is influenced by the residents’ perceived positive and negative impact of tourism (Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004). Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2010) mentioned that, benefits derived from the industry include employment opportunities, revenue generation, opportunities for shopping, recreational opportunities and cultural exchanges. As for the negative side, residents perceive that tourism development affects cultural identity, traditions and regional character (Andereck, 2005); disrupts the life of local residents (Hayley et al, 2005); increase litter and noise pollution (Ap and Crompton, 1998) and increase prices of goods and services (Gu and Wong, 2006).

Scholars have found that local community residents are likely to support tourism development if they perceive that the industry results in more benefits than costs (Gursoy and Ritherford, 2004). One of the most important benefits of tourism development derived by local residents are real or expected economic ones, which in turn produce support for tourism (Jurowski and Uysal, 2002) many communities perceive tourism as a tool of economic development. From this perspective, Andereck and Vogt (2000), note that most of the studies attempting to investigate community support for tourism have found that generally residents hold positive attitudes towards tourism, though it is worth mentioning that a few studies recorded negative attitudes of residents to tourism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

For this study, the researcher used qualitative research to help emphasize on describing, explaining and understand the topic of discussion on development and involvement of the community lifestyle into eco-tourism. The aim of this research is to gather the information and to understand in depth on the issues and challenges as well as the strength and weaknesses on the development of eco-tourism area of the village and the community.

In this study, there are two dimensions that have been identified in providing a better way of finding the information which is social capital and intangible assets. The indicators of social capital, which is togetherness, neighborhood connections, volunteerism and trust were derived from interview data with the community and as well the head of the village and also by doing observation on how their daily activity. A set of standard questions of “Individual Social Participation” were used in collecting data information of the community in Kampung Hulu Rening.

A random sample of 30 people was selected including the head village were interviewed face to face. Resulting in 15 responses with complete data, which were retained for further analysis.

As for the intangible assets, the information was gathered by using a standard questionnaire for each category. The targeted area was analyzed through cultural tradition, town facilities and intellectual property.

Besides that, case study method was use in helping out with the data collection for this research. The method involves a series of in depth study regarding to the purpose of the study.
For the secondary data, the research compiled journals, articles, websites, magazines, and other published and unpublished sources. In order to get a better picture of a future plan for Batang Kali town, information from Majlis Daerah Hulu Selangor were collected. Information regarding the local town and its potential opportunities and threats resulted from the future planning were obtained.

**FINDINGS**

**History of Batang Kali and Hulu Rening**

The town of Batang Kali legend was named through a myth by local that arise from the river Batang Kali which means “Batang” (tree trunk) plus smaller rivers by Gunaratnam (2011) in News Strait Times the main English newspaper. “Batang Kali “ got its unique name from the main river called ‘ batang” that connect to 30 or 40 smaller streams running through the township and villages surrounding it.

In the early 20th century Tin Resources of the British Empire published an article on Batang Kali town that is rich with tin ore production. During this British rule between 1874 to 1956 tin ore is the top export of Malaya sold by East India Company with headquarter in London England.

On 12th December 1948 the British army conducted a military operations against communist terrorists in Batang kaili with Seventh Platoon of G Company of Scottish Guards. The platoon surrounded the rubber estate at Sungai Rimoh and shot dead 24 villagers suspected of communist loyalist and later set fire to the village. Over the years this incident tainted the town’s reputation as a black area or village under the British government and Malayan history.

Two years after the incident, the British government build a new small town of Batang Kali and placed all the Chinese community in one area for easier observation in their activities.

Batang Kali is a small town that is surrounded with rich natural heritage resources for tourism development. According to Loehmann and Kilgour (1998), awareness of the need to improve natural resources management has been growing around the world and Tosun, 2006 stated that community base tourism create better opportunities for local people to gain benefit from tourism taking place in their locality, positives local attitude and the conservation of local resources.

Batang Kali area consist of Tamu Hill, Taman Seri, Taman Wawasan, Taman Desa Jaya, Taman Genting Permain, Desa Alam Ria and Seri Cahaya. As for the rural residential areas, Kampung Sekolah, Kampung Sentosa, Kampung Genting Malik. Hulu Rening, Kampung Kuantan, Hulu Tamu and Orang asli settlement.

The research project area is called Kampung Hulu Rening. This village area is rich with natural resources and occupied by mostly malay race that come from background of Minang, Kampar, Bengkulu and Rawa. This village is headed by a leader that called himself Penghulu or “Tok Empat” to represent the communities and this position were elected by Hulu Selongor District comities. One of his duties is to voice out any issues regarding the communities and to make sure that the District Council would take action.

**Social Capital within the community**

Within the context of development, social capital generally consists of three features: trust, reciprocity and cooperation (Flora, 1998). Added by Park et al (2012), when these elements are strong within communities, community residents are more likely to be able to take advantage of economic, community building and capacity enhancement.
opportunities. Through the findings gather through observation and interview, it seems that mostly the residents in Hulu Rening village are able to trust one another especially when there are big events held in their place.

According to one of the respondent, they would post up a memo at their community center and held a meeting for distribution of work task among them and this led by the head village himself. It seems that from this data collection, they have built community solidarity. According to Huang and Stewart (1996) community solidarity develops: (1) because the residents share similar cultural background and lifestyle they are naturally inclined to identify with one another and (2) personal ties are formed and solidarity strengthened by working with one another on tasks to reach a common goal. Both of these forces were apparent in the community of Hulu Rening. Strong ties among them could contribute to their ability to successfully involve and have a positive attitude in developing their area into Eco-tourism.

Intangible Assets within the Community

From having a good trust and togetherness attitude among the community of Hulu Rening, it also shows that this could link to the community identity and value that can be seen as something unique. This could be their strength besides having beautiful natural resources that surrounding their area. Miller (1992) indicated that community identity is created through careful communication among residents that share personal histories and appreciation for a locale.

It is good to see that there are still preserving the cultural value but somehow this is only practice among the older people which is the second generation. According to them, the new generation wanted to explore and work in town area and this would influence their behaviour.

On the negative side through the observation, the community was not collectively conscious of its value of keeping the river and environment clean. During the fieldtrip, could see some of them would just wash their dirty pot and pans in the river without any guilt feeling. It was deemed a precious river that should be protected and kept clean. Now this somehow will effect negatively on their uniqueness and value towards the future tourist.

RECOMMENDATION

From the findings results indicated the community is satisfied with the condition of the neighborhood of their community, the more positive they perceived tourism impacts, the less they are satisfied with their neighborhood and the more they perceive tourism as having negative impacts on their community. These suggest that before this place becomes a tourist attraction, the planners should be sensitive to the impact of tourism development on neighborhood conditions. They should therefore direct efforts to improve the local community satisfaction with the neighborhood conditions and improve community satisfaction with the physical, social and economic dimensions of neighborhood.

In order to have successful development of Eco-tourism, is not just to have a beautiful natural resources but to have the understanding of the community, and having them involve in activities that could cooperate into the eco-tourism program. By doing so, this would somehow create awareness among them to making sure that they always keep their natural surrounding area beautiful and clean. Plus instead to destroy or not keeping the cultural values, the community should learn and appreciate it to able them preserve in helping to develop a better Eco-tourism place.
Lastly in order to compete successfully in the future as Eco tourism marketplace, which is much more sensitive to uniqueness of the tourism offerings, community should force themselves into emphasize and preserve their local cultural identity, pride of place and thus provide a clear diversification of the Eco tourism resources.

CONCLUSION

This conducted study was able to identify the two elements that can contribute to the success of eco-tourism development that are closely related to the community of Hulu Rening. The two main elements are social capital and intangible assets within the community. For social capital, when a community shares the same lifestyle and are able to work together to achieve a common goal, it can ultimately help to build community solidarity. Such trust and cooperation within the community help to build a positive image and these values which are also the community’s intangible assets, can further contribute towards attracting local and overseas tourists. In order to successfully develop this area, development planners must understand these values that are practiced by the community.

Although maintaining a solid cooperative relationship with one another is a positive value, it sure is contradicting when the people lacks consciousness in maintaining the cleanliness of the environment within the area. Perhaps when the development planners wish to develop Hulu Rening, they will need to oversee this matter as well. On top of learning and understanding the way of life of the people in Hulu Rening, educating the community on maintaining the cleanliness of its natural resources will help to further successfully develop the area into an eco-tourism location.
REFERENCES


