



6th International Research Symposium in Service Management, IRSSM-6 2015, 11-15 August
2015, UiTM Sarawak, Kuching, Malaysia

Rural Areas of ASEAN and Tourism Services, a Field for Innovative Solutions

Frederic Bouchon^{a,*}, Karun Rawat^b

^{a, b}Taylor's University, 1, Jalan Taylor's, 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia.

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the service quality transformation opportunities currently offered to rural areas of ASEAN through innovative approaches in training and through widespread use of internet support. More than half of the population of ASEAN lives in rural areas, which have long been marginalized and left at the periphery of the recent economic development of the region. Despite multiple programmes and policies aimed at fostering tourism development opportunities, the gap remains between the tourism potential of the rural areas and the lack of service management expertise. Capacity building is seen as a crucial step towards the development of a trained labour force. This study explores different tourism capacity building cases across the ASEAN region. It reviews how innovative approaches have managed to connect the local community needs with the global tourism expectations. It analyses secondary data from three cases in Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, looking at the relationship between the community, the capacity building process and the impact on tourism in the local area. The findings show contrasted results that nevertheless share common patterns where innovation has enabled participation and positive service involvement towards tourism. The paper argues for an integration of tourism service management capacity within a wider set of competences which actually empower the community while paradoxically providing higher satisfaction. This study refers to innovative practices initiated by specific community training projects that enhance socio-economic development of the community and appropriate positively tourism and build entrepreneurs. The results of this reflection and comparison provide researchers and practitioners, a matrix of initiatives that could be extended to other rural areas of the ASEAN region.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license
(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the Universiti Teknologi MARA Sarawak

Keywords: rural areas; community-based tourism; ASEAN; innovation

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +603-5629-5514; fax: +603-5629-5522.

E-mail address: frederic.b@taylors.edu.my

1. Introduction

More than 600 million people live in ASEAN, a region with heterogeneous political, economic and socio-cultural differences constituted by Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The rural areas of ASEAN comprise 64% of the population, and concentrate higher rates of poverty than the fast industrializing and developing urban areas. The incidence of poverty in rural areas is 62% higher than in cities (ASEAN Secretariat, 2009). Rural communities are by nature excluded from the fast urban development, and face a relative decrease in human resources and capacity building opportunities that can be regarded as brain-drain in extreme cases. The underdevelopment of rural areas is nevertheless perceived as a potential for tourism due to largely untouched natural resources and scenic rural communities that offer beauty, peace, and tranquillity. Since the 1990s, the nations of the ASEAN have been emphasizing the role of tourism for regional economic development. Tourism has been seen as a solution, providing employment due to its labour intensive nature. The vulnerability of ASEAN rural spaces can be associated with the lack of skilled labour force, a trend that has become more serious and steady across most industry sectors (Magnusson & Alasia, 2004). Rural communities often lack the expertise and talent to move away from the cycle of poverty and traditional agriculture-based economy despite the widespread understanding of the potential of tourism development. The rural destination's quality of product and service, and local communities' attitude is often considered not matching the expectations from tourists and the community. There is a correlation between tourism growth and degree of innovation (Nordin, 2003). Innovation and tourism service development in rural areas are strongly associated in human capability development and capacity building. Capacity building is seen as a crucial step towards the local development. This study aims to compare different tourism service and rural community innovation cases in the ASEAN region. It reviews how innovative approaches placing capacity building at the centre of their project have managed to connect the local community needs with the global tourism expectations.

2. Literature review

2.1 *Tourism service quality in rural areas*

Rural tourism is engaged with various forms of activities based on preservation of cultural and natural environment of local communities enabling original experiences for the tourists during their stay (Epler Wood, 2002). Rural tourism is generally connoted to the idea of rusticity and authenticity, largely depending on natural environment, arts, heritage and tradition of agrarian societies. It is considered to bring economic benefits to the local communities as well as enhancing the tourist experience by its opportunities of interaction between local communities and tourists (Aref & Gill, 2009; Khound, 2013). Tourism in small rural areas of ASEAN is perceived as a well-suited tool for poverty alleviation, in often isolated, marginal or peripheral communities, whose assets are natural scenery and preserved cultural elements, as well as a supply of labour force. Tourism, being labour intensive where consumption occurs normally at the point of production, can capitalize on these few assets (Lo & Lai, 2003). However tourism development requires also a huge amount of investment of time, skills, and money to sustain the social and economic environment. The demand has also become more sophisticated, more flexible and selective in relation to different elements of tourism supply, service quality, price and others (Cejvanovic, Duric & Vujic, 2009). This is the case also in the rural areas, despite a limited literature on the rural areas tourism service quality. The assumption remains that Community-based Tourism (CBT) has to provide a rustic and basic service as a guarantee of authenticity. As the interest in tourism is increasingly growing, and issues are getting more problematic, alternative forms of tourism were developed with primary concern on community involvement. Smith and Eadington (1992) consider rural tourism as part of alternative practices that include '*forms of tourism that are consistent with natural, social and community values and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experiences*'. These philosophies include ecotourism, pro-poor tourism, community-based tourism, responsible tourism and agro-rural/farm tourism but none of these have a significant role in the community transformation in which would change deeply the service quality. It is well-accepted that the level of service quality plays a capital role on visitors' satisfaction and their intention to revisit the destination (Tzetzis, Alexandris, & Kapsampeli, 2014). Maintaining the quality standards is one of the most important criteria of customer satisfaction (Said, Shuib, Ayob & Yaakob, 2013) and loyalty in the current competitive environment. The failure to offer and deliver such expectation leads to poor performance in the tourism service industry. In contrast,

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1107383>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1107383>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)