



## Case study

## Challenges of community-based homestay programme in Sabah, Malaysia: Hopeful or hopeless?



Velan Kunjuraman\*, Rosazman Hussin

*Ethnography and Development Research Unit, Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia*

## ARTICLE INFO

## Article history:

Received 30 June 2016

Received in revised form 21 October 2016

Accepted 25 October 2016

Available online xxxx

## Keywords:

Community-based tourism

Community participation

Challenges

Lower Kinabatangan-Segama wetlands

## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the challenges faced by the participants of community-based homestay programme in Dagat Village of Lower Kinabatangan-Segama Wetlands of Sabah, Malaysia. Primary data were gathered through field observation and in-depth interviews conducted with the participants in September 2015 and March 2016. The results of this study revealed that the tourism activities based on homestay programme in Dagat Village have the potential to be developed because of its vast natural resources but it was found that the local community faced many challenges during their homestay operation at the study site, which include lack of infrastructure development, poor promotional activity, lack of trained human resource, safety and security issues, poor local leadership, and lack of tourism management experiences that cause the homestay programme operation to be unsustainable. Therefore, this study recommends the importance of collaboration and partnerships among tourism stakeholders in order to achieve a successful ecotourism development.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Community-based tourism (CBT) has been proved to provide multiple benefits to the host destination communities and to act as a development tool (Mbaiwa, 2005). However, some literature claimed that CBT's contributions to the developmental issues; especially issue related to community development is still questionable (Blackstock, 2005). Blackstock describes CBT as 'naïve and unrealistic' with the justification of three core elements: (a) being too focused on industry development compared to community empowerment, (b) ignoring the internal dynamics of communities, and (c) ignoring the external barriers such as inequality between developers and community members that affect the degree of local control (Johnson, 2010: 151). However, CBT role as a community development approach and its potential are still acknowledged (Moscardo, 2008; Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2014; Stone & Stone, 2011). For instance, Stone and Stone (2011) argued that despite the problems involving the community members faced by the community-based tourism enterprise in Botswana, the arrivals of tourists actually increased and profits were made. As a result, CBT has brought economic benefits to the local community, and "therefore be premature to say that CBT is not useful for rural communities and unfair to generalise that CBT projects are a failure" (Stone & Stone, 2011: 111). For developing countries such as Malaysia, CBT projects have been regarded as development

tool for rural communities and as a platform towards infrastructure development in the country (Hussin, 2006).

In order to enjoy the benefits provided by CBT, it is important to note that rural community is often faced with a number of problems or challenges in their daily operation (Mohd Nor & Kayat, 2010; Pusiran & Xiao, 2013). CBT challenges can be divided into two components, namely internal (mental considerations) and external (physical considerations) challenges (Kunjuraman, Hussin, & Yasir, 2015) that act as a barrier or limit the community to actively takes part in any CBT projects in the developing countries. Substantial amount of tourism literature indicates that local community is often faced with many challenges or problems in order to embark on any CBT projects within their destination (Bhan & Singh, 2014; Dukeshire & Thurlow, 2002; Hussin, 2008; Johnson, 2010; Kim, Park, & Phandanouvong, 2014; Kunjuraman et al., 2015; Lukhele & Mearns, 2013; Mustapha, Azman, & Ibrahim, 2013).

Despite the rich body literature on CBT, some concerns regarding the need for further study have been taken into consideration in order to sought out the barriers and challenges faced by the local community, especially the community-based homestay programme (Pusiran & Xiao, 2013). Pusiran and Xiao (2013: 7) expressed that "there are many challenges affecting the effectiveness of the homestay programme and each one could be different from one community to another and research needs to address the challenges found from previous studies and explore other challenges that may influence the success or failures of homestay operations". Hence, to respond to this expression and fill the gap of the literature, a study was carried out to explore the challenges faced by the homestay programme of local community in Dagat Village, Lower Kinabatangan-

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [velan1199@gmail.com](mailto:velan1199@gmail.com) (V. Kunjuraman).

Segama, Sabah. By recognising the potential and value of CBT as a community development tool, this study could contribute to the current body of knowledge related to community-based tourism development in the context of developing countries.

## 2. Community participation in tourism development and their limitations: An overview

As mentioned earlier, local community is often faced with many challenges to actively participate in community-based tourism projects, thus this situation has contributed to an unsustainable development (Butler, 1992). Hence, hindering factors should be identified and managed in order to associate and facilitate the local community participation in tourism development (Kim et al., 2014). However, most of the cases involving the lack of participation of rural community are caused by several reasons. In the context of developing countries, Tosun (2000) state that the limitations of community participation in tourism development process can be divided into three main components: (1) operational limitations, (2) structural limitations, and (3) cultural limitations. Such limitations for operational components include the centralisation of public administration of tourism and lack of co-ordination as well as information. For structural limitations, a few items that limit the community participation in tourism development such as attitudes of professionals, lack of expertise, elite domination, lack of appropriate legal system, lack of trained human resources, relatively high cost of community participation, and lack of financial resources were identified. Finally, cultural limitations items which include limited capacity of poor people as well as apathy and low level of awareness possess by the local community in the tourism destination. Most of the three limitations presented occur in developing countries, but they do not exist in every tourist destination (Mustapha et al., 2013: 106). Therefore, Tosun's idea of community barriers in tourism development is applicable and relevant for this study. The applicability of Tosun's (2000) idea of limitations was observed by previous literature in other developing countries. For instance, Bhan and Singh's (2014) study in India concluded that tourism activities conducted through homestay programme face several challenges such as poor infrastructural facilities, lack of skilled human resource, lack of proper legal regulations, poor marketing and promotional activities, poor coordination, less awareness regarding conservation and cultural resources, improper management of natural resources, poor maintenance of peace, and security and chaos situations. Aref (2011) indicates that financial constraints are considered as a key element contributing to poor tourism management which limits the community participation in tourism development in Shiraz, Iran. In addition, Dogra and Gupta (2012) studied the barrier of community participation in tourism development in Sudhmahadev tourist destination of Jammu and Kashmir, India, and it was confirmed that structural limitation is the main hurdle for community participation. They also further identified the limitations that create serious trouble in the process of community participation which also weaken the touristic destination development process.

Using the qualitative research approach, Kim et al. (2014) studied the barriers of local community participation in community-based tourism in Houay Kaeng Village, Laos. Based on the study's findings, the five key barriers that were identified include: (1) low education levels and lack of knowledge about tourism, (2) poor living conditions and lack of financial support, (3) busy daily routine tasks and lack of time for tourism participation, (4) local community's perception of tourism as a seasonal business with low income, and (5) power disparities, institutional disincentives, and local's distrust in authorities. It was also warned that if no serious actions are taken by the relevant authorities, the community-based ecotourism project in the study site might fail and it may impose low level of willingness for future participation in tourism-related decision making process. Finally, Stone and Stone (2011) indicated that local community participation in Khama Rhino Sanctuary Trust, a community-based tourism enterprise in Botswana

was at the dissatisfactory stage. Several challenges were identified as the obstacles, namely lack of communal sense of ownership, inadequate employment creation and dependence on external funding, lack of information, loss of benefits, and an imbalance in board representation.

In Malaysia, several studies pertaining to rural community participation in tourism development have been carried out by local researchers in different geographical locations. First, a study carried out by Mustapha et al. (2013) indicated that there are internal (culture) and external barriers (operational and structural) that hinder the local community participation in tourism development at Tioman Island, Malaysia. Interestingly, the study also found that weather condition at the island is an external barrier which hinders the local community to be actively involved in tourism development process. In Sabah, Hussin (2008) studied the local community participation in homestay programme at Lower Kinabatangan, and it was concluded that several limitations such as lack of capital resources and financial assistance, ineffectiveness of homestay management at village level, lack of marketing, barrier to language communication, and lack of continued support and consultation from government agencies are the barriers to enhance the active participation of the locals. Similar findings obtained by Mohd Nor and Kayat (2010) have confirmed that method of payment, passive community, leadership problems, and conflict in the community are the limitations faced by the local community engagement in homestay development in three homestay villages located in Langkawi Island, Kedah, and Selangor.

Another study was conducted by Kunjuran et al. (2015) on community participation in homestay tourism development in Bum Bum Island, Semporna, Sabah. The findings revealed that the local community faces a few problems and challenges in their homestay programme operation such as lack of capital resources and financial assistance, language barriers, lack of skills and knowledge in the management of homestay, and lack of electricity and clean water supply. In order to solve these limitations and come up with proactive solutions, the local community cannot be left to stand alone without the help of relevant stakeholders. If the possible measures are taken into consideration and CBT is properly managed, Giampiccoli and Kalis (2012:183) believe that 'it can provide a range of development benefits to communities, especially in poor and disadvantaged areas'.

## 3. Safety and security in tourism

Batra (2008) reviewed the Manual on Assistance to Tourists by Bruinink and Slump (1997) found that the main impact on the foreign tourists' general feeling was their psychosocial effects. He found that when the tourist experienced crimes during their holidays in different locations, he or she may encounter 4 types of psychosocial effects namely a feeling of helplessness, a feeling of being unsafe, vulnerability and loss of control and damage to his or her trust in others. In the context of tourism, studies pertaining to the safety and security of tourists have gain attention of many scholars with different setting (Barker & Page, 2002; Batra, 2008; Boakye, 2012; George, 2002; Page & Hall, 2002; Pearce, 1988; Ryan, 1993). Pearce (1988) identified that an element of personal security is the main important factor for tourist to make choices for travelling to different locations and has been influencing their travel behaviour. If the tourist encounters any crime during their stay most likely they will have bad impression towards that specific tourist destination. Study about tourist's perception towards safety and security in tourist destination has been carried out by George in 2002 in Cape Town, South Africa, and he revealed that respondents has positive perceptions of safety and security while staying in Cape Town. However, study also confirmed that respondents felt unsafe going out after dark and using the city's public transport. Thus, safety and security in tourist destination are difficult to manage properly unless serious proactive measures are taken.

In addition, another study done by Boakye (2012) indicates that tourists who travelled to Ghana felt unsafe at tourist attraction sites as

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5108798>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5108798>

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