

Community Participation and Barriers in Community Based Tourism: A Case Study in Kampung Penurin Betong.

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Abstract

The existence of community-based tourism or CBT as part of market niche playing a vital role in tourism industry nowadays. However, several studies shows that there is showing that there are still many rural communities do not understand and did not engage in any activities involving tourism, especially community-based tourism. Local communities that live at the rural areas did not aware on the CBT development actually can help the community to improve their socioeconomic, preserved their customs and culture and protect the environment. The suggestion highlighted homestay program shall be developed at the Kampung Penurin, Betong as CBT product to be offered to the outsider in future. Thus, this study was done to address the objective of identifying the community participation and barriers in community-based tourism at the Kampung Penurin, Betong. There was a total of 47 families with 186 number of people staying at the villages. Nevertheless, only 26 head of the families (represented by 26 family) managed to participated in the interview in this qualitative study using convenience sampling. This is because many heads of families were not in the longhouse when this study was conducted. This study concludes that community-based tourism activities are still not well received among the community in Kampung Penurin, Betong as most of them did not engage in the CBT. Lack of knowledge and information on tourism in the community including lack of financial sources (Capital) to develop community-based tourism products were identified as the main factors that cause them not to engage in community -based tourism activities.

Keywords: - community based tourism, rural tourism, Kampung Penurin tourism

1. Introduction

Community Based Tourism or CBT is the tourism activities that related to the ecotourism, host community's traditions, cultural and heritage in which being recognized as the tools that helps them to having huge potentials in generating income, new employment, conservation of the nature, preserving their culture and providing the educational opportunities. According Amran and Zainab (2019), CBT involving long -term process and approach that helps to maximizing the benefits of tourism to the local community and reduce the negative impacts of tourism towards the community and their resources. CBT also sometimes refers as rural tourism in which CBT mostly located at the rural areas especially in Malaysia. Rural tourism usually can be identified based on characteristic that involving local community participation that sharing the life and experience at rural tourism destination (Paimin et al., 2014).

In Malaysia, the CBT through Malaysian Homestay Programme (MHP) is one of the methods used in order to preserving the culture, traditions and heritage existed in Malaysia. Income generated by the Malaysian Homestay Programme (MHP) from 2015 until 2019 increased from RM 27 million to RM 29 million. However, due to the pandemic of

Covid-19, the income performances through MHP reduce to RM 9.1 million stated in 2020 (Kementerian Pelancongan Seni dan Budaya Malaysia, 2021).

It is believed that the numbers of tourism will be highly increased after the pandemic of Covid-19 whereby the government could focus on the domestic tourism as part of the recovery in Malaysian tourism industry. It was recorded the total of RM64,507 incomes from January until September despite Covid-19 pandemic in Penang through Malaysia Homestay Program. The Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture (MoTAC) Penang Director, Mr. Jonathan Freddy P. Bagang stated that homestay industry still relevant and has the potential as homestay were choose as accommodation for domestic and foreign tourists (The Star Online, 2020). However, only two homestays (Registered under MoTAC) located at the Betong Division which both located about 1 hour from the Betong Town. It shows the community still lack in participating in tourism in at Betong Division.

Betong Division one of the twelve division in Sarawak located about 4 hours from the Kuching (The Capital City of the Sarawak) and can be access using the land transportation (main transportation). Based on the MyCensus2020 recorded in 2021, the

total population at the Betong Division itself consists of 128,000 number of populations (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021). The main ethnic consists of the Malay community (54%), Iban community (41%), Chinese community (4%) and less than 1% population represented by other ethnics (Pejabat Daerah Betong, 2021).

Thus, the study was conducted at the Kampung Penurin, Betong which located about 8 km from the town of Betong. The longhouse currently leads by Mr. Sibat Anak Banyan (*Tuai Rumah*). “*Tuai Rumah*” or leader of the longhouse is the person which took care of the welfare and responsible in maintaining the harmony of Iban society (Islam et al., 2020). “*Tuai Bilik*” is the leader of the family in which all the family staying at the longhouse will be led by the “*tuai rumah*”. Let say if the longhouse consists of 30 rooms, meaning there will be 30 family staying at the longhouse or can be considered as 30 “*tuai bilik*” or leader of the family at the longhouse. Kampung Penurin has the total of 47 family, however there are only 30 family staying at moment since most of the family that are from this longhouse are working and staying at the city center such as Kuching, Sibu, Bintulu and Miri. Those family only returning to their hometown at Kampung Penurin, Betong during the festive or public holiday only. The rationale of this study is to highlight Kampung Penurin, Betong as one of the potential products of the community-based tourism which will suggest them to register their longhouse as homestay registered under Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture Malaysia (MoTAC). So, the objectives of this study are to identified how many people of the Penurin community actually participated in the community-based tourism activities and then expose the main barriers that existed causing these communities to be unaware or did not participate in community-based tourism activity at Kampung Penurin, Betong.



Figure 1: Location of Kampung Penurin Betong

2. Literature Review

Community-based tourism (CBT) is actually one of the tools that can help the local community who stay at the rural area or division to managed their own tourism resources and at the same time ensuring the local community participation. CBT activities comprises of activities such as making the handicraft, making and selling traditional food, cultural display, homestays, nature guiding, heritage trails and so forth. CBT actually helps the rural community to generates income, diversifying their own local economy, practice and preserve the cultural and heritage, protecting the environment and promotes the educational opportunities (Hamzah and Khalifah, 2019). Similar to the Mohamad (2016) mentioning CBT is a form of the activities or project lead by the rural community which has the objectives on reduce the economic hardships, protecting the environmental and socio-cultural which one of the challenges faced by the rural community itself.

2.1 Community Participation

In CBT, the community participation is important in the development of their own CBT product and resources. The majority of interviewees, community leaders, and participants agree that the local community lacks understanding and interest in CBT development. As a result, the community has been unwilling to participate in the CBT development process (Tamir, 2015). In Participation of the community play an important role in tourism development especially in an effort to improve the quality of life (Gani et al., 2013). However, there is studies shown that local community involvement on those handicraft or entrepreneurship (homestay operator) still at low and unsatisfactory level which most of them less interested on the activities involving on tourism entrepreneurship (Atiqah et al., 2014). Local community participation is highly need through collaboration, joint consultation, collaboration with the government, tour operators and educational institution in order to ensure CBT program such as homestay benefit economically, socially and culturally to the local community itself (Bhuiyan, 2019).

2.2 Barrier in The Community-Based Tourism

The communication fluency such as English language knowledge can be one of the highlight barriers in community-based tourism. Poor educational background did make the communication become a gap between the tourist or tourist consultant and the local community that ended in the local people less knowledgeable in tourism and also in entrepreneurship opportunities (Kala and Bagri, 2018). This led to the lack of knowledge among the local community in

community-based tourism. Several studies also shown that tourism players unable to coordinate with the local community regarding the tourism activities because of the local community has little knowledge including empowerment and lack of experience to express good ideas (Azman, 2013 and Lamat et al., 2019). Apart from that, findings by Kim et al. (2014) mentioned that most of the local community earned very little and has no capital to improve the toilet and to convert a room in the house to serve the guest. In line with this, Velnisa et al (2014) conclude that a lot of community were not acquainted with tourism knowledge, lack of capital and communication skills.

3. Methodology

This study using descriptive research design and used a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was adopted from previous studies and was pre-tested. The pre-test was conducted by interviewing five (5) lecturers to ensure the question can be understand by the respondent. The questionnaire is divided into three sections; (a) respondents' demographic profile, (b) community participation, and (c) barriers of participation. Simple question such as "Have you ever been involved with any community-based tourism activities?" were ask in the interview. If 'yes', then the interview session conducted throughout the section B, if the answer is 'no' then respondent will need to respondent the section C questions. For section C, the respondents were asked to list some of their barriers to participate in community-based tourism. There is no limit of number or reason as the researcher later on will only take their list of answer given and summarize to the same or nearest meaning. The interview objectives are focusing on the participation and barrier that experienced by the local community in community-based tourism. Due to the level of understanding of the community, the questions were asked in Bahasa Malaysia (then the findings were translated in English).

Using simple opportunity sampling or known as convenience sampling (Etikan, 2016) whereby this study only targeting the population available at the time which resulted total of 26 responses which is the head of the families (representing only 26 family including head of the longhouse) of Kampung Penurin, Betong. The data analysed using descriptive analysis through IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

4. Finding and Analysis

The findings and analysis were divided into 3 sections which is the demographic profile, community participation and barriers to involve in community-based tourism.

4.1 Demographic Profile

Table 1 stated 69.2% of the respondent are male, while female recorded 30.8%. Most of the people in the Kampung Penurin, Betong are more than 60 years old and above which recorded 73.1% from the total of the respondent. More than half of the respondent has at least SRP (*Sijil Rendah Pelajaran*) and about 3.8% had continued the study until STPM (*Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia*) or Diploma. Majority the community at Kampung Penurin, Betong are unemployed and staying at the long house as the leader of the family (*Tuai Bilik* or *Ketua Bilik*).

Table 1: Demographic profile of respondents.

	N	%
Gender		
Male	18	69.2
Female	8	30.8
Age		
21 – 34 years old	1	3.8
35 – 45 years old	1	3.8
46 – 59 years old	5	19.2
60 years old and above	19	73.1
Occupation Background		
Private Sector	3	11.5
Self-Employed/Business	2	7.7
Unemployed	12	46.2
Pensioner	3	11.5
Other: Farmer	5	19.3
Other: Head of the village	1	3.9
Academic Background		
SRP/PMR/PT3	17	65.4
SPM	8	30.8
STPM/Diploma	1	3.8

4.2 Community Participation

Table 2 recorded that 80.8% from the total respondents did not involve in any tourism activities. Only 19.2% respondents are involved in tourism activities focusing on the community-based tourism at Kampung Penurin, Betong and their involvement are in the handicraft activities (60%), traditional food activities such as making the *kueh chap*, *penyaram*, *kuih jala* and many other traditional foods (20%) and some of the respondents involves in the making of *tuak* (20%). Making the *tuak* (rice wine) is part of the traditional Iban community cultures. All five respondents that involves in community-based tourism doing their business as a part-time basis (100%). The respondent's involvement years of experience recorded 1 year to 2 years of experiences (40%), 2 years to 3 years of

experiences (40%) and only 20.0% recorded the experience involving in the community-based tourism which is more than 5 years of experiences. The majority reason of the respondents involved in community-based tourism as a hobby only which it is recorded 80.0% from the total respondent that involves in the community-based tourism.

Table 2: Community participation in community based tourism.

	N	%
Involvement in Community Based Tourism		
Yes	5	19.2
No	21	80.8
Types of Community Based Tourism activities involved		
Handicraft	3	60.0
Traditional Food	1	20.0
Making of <i>Tuak</i>	1	20.0
Involvement in Community Based Tourism		
Part-Time	5	100.0
Years involved in Community Based Tourism		
1 – 2 years experiences	2	40.0
2 – 3 years experiences	2	40.0
More than 5 years	1	20.0
Reason involved in Community Based Tourism		
Hobby	4	80.0
Side Income	1	20.0

4.3 Barriers to Involve in Community-Based Tourism

It is shown on Table 3 on the barriers for the local community at the Kampung Penurin to involve in the community-based tourism. Majority stated lack of capital as their main barriers in which it recorded 76.9% from the total respondents. Other significant barriers stated by the respondents are lack of tourism knowledge (53.9%). The barriers such as poor infrastructure, lack of government support and poor English communication recorded 26.9%, 23.1% and 15.4% respectively. The least barriers for the involvement in community-based tourism noted by the respondents are the health concerns (3.9%)

Table 3: Barriers to involve in the community based tourism.

	N	%
Lack of Capital	20	76.9
Lack of tourism knowledge	14	53.9

knowledge		
Poor infrastructure	7	26.9
Lack of government support	6	23.1
Poor English communication	4	15.4
Health concerns	1	3.9

The community of the Kampung Penurin mostly staying at home (Rumah Panjang) whereby most of their activities such as making a handicraft, farming and making traditional food. These products are made just to fill in their leisure time or part time only as a hobby. Similar to the findings by Paimin et al. (2014) the study conducted at Kiulu, Sabah shows that the local community (rural community) at Kiulu involving in tourism on part-time basis. The findings also mentioned that the involvement of the rural community at Kiulu in tourism is due to the activity conducted related to their hobby. At the Kampung Penurin, the community-based tourism can be highlighted because that place still conducting a traditional Iban ethnic ritual of “*miring*” (Traditional ritual) and the spirit of the “*antu palak*” (enemy skull – headhunting activities in the past). This can be one of the uniqueness of the Kampung Penurin, Betong itself. Every year they celebrating the Gawai Festival and the “Gawai Antu” whereby a special ritual believed to give an offering to the spirit of “*antu palak*”. Thus, the community of the Kampung Penurin can take this uniqueness at their long house as an opportunity to established a homestay (to be registered with MoTAC under Malaysian Homestay Program). This might give an opportunity to the local community that staying at home (long house) to work as one of the homestay operators.

On the other hand, the lack of community participation in community -based tourism is due to lack of capital or funding sources. Thus, insufficient amount of money makes the local community of the Kampung Penurin lost interest to involves in the community-based tourism. Most of them think that the tourism sector needs huge funds or capital to venture into. Besides that, lack of tourism knowledge especially the information on the community-based tourism become another barrier on why the local community did not involves in the community-based tourism itself. In order to improves the infrastructure at the Kampung Penurin, it is best to conduct an awareness on tourism industry specifically on community-based tourism to the local community first then the local community can have the knowledge about tourism and this will help the community to manage their own resources.

5. Conclusion

Betong division still developing as it is still considered as one of the rural areas that still have the natural environment products such as waterfall, clearwater river, hiking site, cultural and heritage center. Developing Kampung Penurin, Betong as one of the potential CBT products highly need the participation of the local community itself. More participation and consistent participation will not only will help the community to gained an extra income on their own but the most important is the able to develop their longhouse to be one of the tourism destinations in future which as the homestay at the town of Betong division.

Suggestion to the community is to work together with institution or universities that can help the community to give more information on the tourism especially community-based tourism. This may be can help the community to understand how the process in developing the community-based tourism product such as Kampung Penurin itself to be offered to the public. Since the community has the issues on the financial resources as the start-up capital, non-governmental organization (NGO) and the government playing the major roles to help and guide the community to find the way to seek the potential financial support such as Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA) and Ministry of Rural Development for the advice on the potential grant that can help the community to starts their CBT product. Tourism stakeholders such as NGO and government playing a vital role to help and giving awareness to the local community so that they can get as much as they can on the information regarding the community-based tourism and its development process. Other benefits based on previous study by Aziz et al. (2012) mentioned that local ecotourism can established more job and business opportunities to the local community including establishing the needs for physical development such as new infrastructure.

The rationale of the Kampung Penurin, Betong can be highlighted as one of the community-based tourism products because it has the uniqueness of Iban tradition and celebration (*“Miring”, “Gawai Antu”*), handicrafts (Currently done as part of the hobby) such as rattan baskets, mats (*tikar mengkuang*), farming activities (paddy fields, rubber plantations), bird watching activities, and learning to make traditional food (Such as *“Kuih Jala”, “Penyaram”, “Kuih cap”*) or some of the *“tuak”* (rice wine) making. It is important to make Kampung Penurin, Betong as one of the products and services focus on community-based tourism as the Betong division already have some existing tourism place of interest such as Bukit Sadok (Hiking site and headhunters trails), Spak Clearwater Rafting, Fort Lily, Betong Rural Produce

Market and so forth. At Betong town itself, there is no homestay established yet. Currently, there are only two homestays established at Pusa and Maludam which located about 1 hour drive from the Betong town. It is the best if Kampung Penurin, Betong can venture into homestay program as well. Findings by Kunjuraman and Husin, (2014) mentioned that homestay program at Kampung Mesilou, Sabah got ancillary income that actually help develop their socioeconomic. Though this study, we know that the number of the community is still low in participating in tourism activities such as CBT. Best suggestion is to invite the homestay operator that already success to gives a broad and deep view about community-based tourism. This will help to guide and supply the community of the Penurin with more information not only in tourism but focusing on community-based tourism such as nature guiding, homestay, agrotourism and many more. Homestay program through CBT also one of the bigger roles in developing the tourism industry and it is a win-win tourism product in Sarawak (Kaur et al., 2016). In addition, homestay is one of the good examples of community-based tourism activities that Kampung Penurin community can participates in the future. This study is important as one of the baseline researches that can help the future research to conduct more study on the community-based tourism at Betong division.

This study concludes that community-based tourism activities are still not well received among the community in Kampung Penurin, Betong due to the lack of knowledge and information on tourism in the community as well as the lack of financial resources to be used as capital to develop community-based tourism products. That is the reason why the stakeholders need to involves and start to do awareness on the CBT program especially the homestay program as per highlighted earlier on. Thus, the participation of the stakeholders and the local community of the Kampung Penurin, Betong would result a successful community-based tourism development in future.

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