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3rd Global Summit on Peace through Tourism - Education Forum



**One Earth One Family:
Travel & Tourism - Serving a Higher Purpose**

Pattaya, Thailand • October 2-5, 2005

FORUM PROCEEDINGS

Forum Proceedings Editor:

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3RD GLOBAL SUMMIT ON PEACE THROUGH TOURISM - EDUCATION FORUM

"ONE EARTH ONE FAMILY: TRAVEL & TOURISM - SERVING A HIGHER
PURPOSE"

Preface

This is the proceedings for the **Education Forum** at the 3rd **Global Summit on Peace through Tourism - "One Earth One Family: Travel & Tourism - Serving a Higher Purpose"**, which was held in Pattaya, Thailand in October 2-5, 2005. The Forum was organized by International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) with the support and collaboration of the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau (TCEB) and World Tourism Organization (WTO).

This Forum was aimed to develop a 21st Century Agenda for Peace through Tourism. The Forum was intended to address key global issues of our time and fostered an open dialogue and exchange of ideas for leading government, industry, donor agency, and NGO decision makers, as well as leading educators, researchers, professionals and practitioners, to debate and reach consensus on the contribution of the world's largest industry to the global issues. This year's Forum featured close to 30 papers and panel presentations by researchers and practitioners from more than 10 countries. All papers and abstracts were selected based on a double-blind review by a panel of experts, which primarily consisted of 6 academic staff internationally.

Organizing an international Forum with published proceedings takes collective team efforts by many people. I wish to take this opportunity to thank a number of individuals who have contributed to the success of this forum. First, I would like to thank the paper and panel presenters as well as paper session chairs and paper reviewers for their contribution of expertise, time and efforts. Second, a hard work by the Forum Secretariat Miss Antonia Wong at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and the contributions and support by Mr. Louis D'Amore and staff at the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) are noted with a deep appreciation. Finally, I wish to thank both industry and institutional sponsors of the Forum for their support that have made the Forum a success.



Professor Kaye Chon
Education Forum Chairman & Forum Proceedings Editor
3rd Global Summit on Peace through Tourism - Education Forum
"One Earth One Family: Travel & Tourism - Serving a Higher Purpose"
Pattaya, Thailand

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COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is on the ecotourism development and its local community participation. The methodology selected is comparative case studies method. The data gathered are from various stakeholders. They are 1) Local community; 2) Government and its related agencies and Non-Governmental Agencies; 3) Business; and 4) Tourists. Four ecotourism sites in Sabah were selected, which are Kampung Bavanggazo, Batu Puteh, Kampung Rantai and Sukau. The comparative analysis suggested more similarities rather than dissimilarities between and among four sites. The similarities are consistent with the general ecotourism characteristics, and that is a small-scale operation; the products offered are nature-based with some level of involvement from the local community where benefits channelled to the local environment and economies. Even with a lot of similarities, the nature of operation individualises each site.

Key Words: Ecotourism, Community, Development, Participation

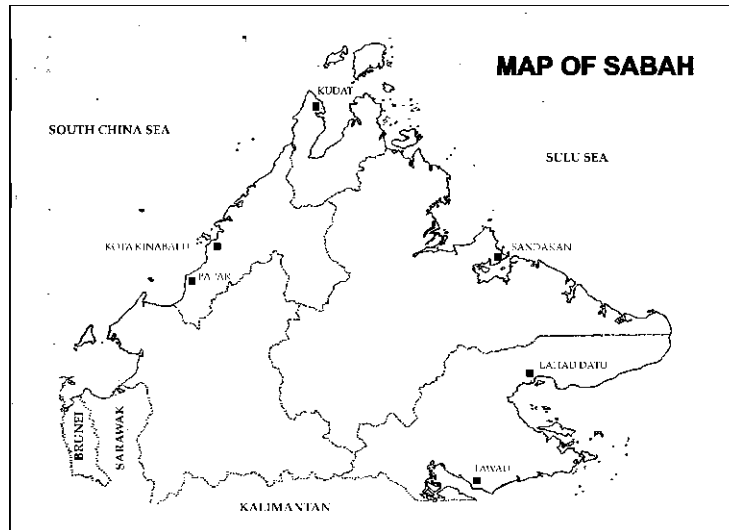
INTRODUCTION

Sabah (Figure 1), as part of Borneo, is romantically associated with impenetrable jungles and is considered a mystical, mysterious land. The tourism industry in Sabah is considered relatively young (Chan & Yeoh, 2001). Tourism in Sabah began as a small-scale industry in the year 1986. It was started by visits to some of the natural features found abundantly in some protected or undisturbed areas. Few sites were developed as mass tourist attractions such as Tunku Abdul Rahman Parks, Mount Kinabalu (the highest mountain in South East Asia) and the Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre at Sepilok, Sandakan. Sabah is popular from both domestic and international market. The figures are almost evenly distributed. The arrivals of tourists for 2002 and 2003 are over 1 million (Sabah Tourism Board, 2004). There is a trend of increasing visitor arrivals and it is expected to continue in the future.

Sabah has evolved from a 'value for money' destination to a 'nature adventure' destination. The year 2000 was declared as the *Visit Sabah Year*, where the marketing catchphrase was '**Sabah Natur(e)ally**' which emphasised nature and culture. The Sabah Tourism Board (1999/2000) chose 10 brand images for Sabah, namely Kinabalu Nature, Wildlife, Exploring the Borneo Rainforest, Soft adventure activities, Tough wild adventure activities, Cultural experience, Diving and snorkeling, Islands and beaches for relaxation, Meetings, Incentives, Courses and Exhibitions (MICE), and golfing, targeting their respective markets. The focus on nature and culture clearly puts Sabah natural resources under the spotlight and at the same time, elevating the nature-based tourism products such as ecotourism into prominence.

Ecotourism is now the main focus of the tourism industry in Sabah (Sabah Tourism Board, 2002). The main attraction is the diverse wildlife consisting of almost 200 species of mammals and over 500 species of birds with Orang Utan as the flagship wildlife and Rafflesia, Slipper Orchid and Pitcher Plant as the flagship plants. The State government agencies such as Forest Department, Wildlife Department and Sabah Parks are entrusted with the conservation and management of the state's natural resources - forest and wildlife (Chan & Yeoh, 2001). The various ethnic groups, more than 30 of them, provide the rich and diverse cultural heritage. The stable Federal and State governments provide an environment that is conducive for successful tourism industry in Sabah.

Figure 1
Map of Sabah and It's Major Cities



ECOTOURISM AND LOCAL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SABAH

Ecotourism industry in Sabah is mainly private sector-led. These are mainly urban-based tour operators and there are also a handful of local-run sites. The government and NGOs are supportive with the industry. The government and NGOs encourage private enterprises to get involved, develop and promote ecotourism destinations in the country based on the guidelines prepared by the relevant authorities. The private sector is mainly involved in developing ecolodges, organising tours and marketing products and conducting training programs for their members through their various business associations. Although the development of the tourism industry is mainly private sector-led, the Malaysian Government is also doing its share to support ecotourism development. In addition to the planning and coordinating functions, both the federal and the state governments have been providing funds to develop infrastructure facilities at various ecotourism destinations, as stimulus to the private sector.

There has been a lot of government encouragement for entrepreneurs especially in the rural community to set up small and medium scale tourism enterprises in the rural area. The Sabah Tourism Master Plan (1996) states that an important goal of tourism development, including ecotourism, in the rural areas is to maximise community participation and distribution of socio-economic benefits to the rural communities. One of the main strategies to improve the living standard of the rural population in Sabah, in the context of tourism development, is the promotion of community enterprise. It is a collective activity initiated by the community themselves to raise socio-economic standards, improve their environment and subsequently uplift their quality of life. Based on the concept of self-help, mutual help and common ownership, the community enterprise encourages the participation of the local community in conceptualising their development needs and in the decision making over control of scarce economic resources.

ECOTOURISM SITES

Among many ecotourism sites in Sabah, four were selected based on the set of their ecotourism criteria. They offer ecotourism products, practice ecotourism concepts and involve the local community at various levels. Each section explores the sites as separate case studies and

comparative analysis is used to analyse the case studies. Each case studies give essential background to the area and details on its ecotourism operation and local community participation. It also highlights the attractions and activities that are available at the site. All of the research sites can be referred to Figure 2.

Kampung Bavanggazo

Kampung Bavanggazo is situated on the northern tip of Sabah in the Kudat district approximately 130 km north of Kota Kinabalu, the capital city of Sabah, which is a 3-hour drive. The Rungus people, who are a sub-tribe of the Kadazandusun indigenous ethnic group, inhabit the village. The Rungus people can only be found at the Kudat and Bengkoka Peninsula. The villagers are mainly farmers and many of its women are quite renowned in their handicraft making skills originating from the adjacent Tinangol Village. Bavanggazo (*lit. big river*) got its name from a river that runs past through the area.

In early August 1992, the construction of the first long house with nine rooms was started. It was built using local materials. Water supply came from two natural water reservoirs on the top of Gomantong Hill. There are only six families involved in the operation. The Bavanggazo Rungus Longhouse offered homestay products to visitors and it has become a living museum with a showcase of Rungus custom and culture. It was gazetted as a village reserve for five acres. Next to it is another reserve for water catchments on Gomantong Hill. The surrounding villages managed to specialise in one industry such as Sumangkap Village on gong making and Gambizou Village on honeybee farming. Bavanggazo decided on tourism as their sole industry. There was support from the state government in form of seed funding and consultation. The Sabah Tourism Board was consistently giving consultation to the Bavanggazo Rungus Longhouse committee.

The tourism operation has revived some of their traditional festivals and customs. Many recent weddings are done in a traditional manner and visitors are invited to attend this rare and unique occasion. There is also a revival of an important festival, which is called the *Magahan* Festival. This traditional festival is to celebrate the spirits of the dead. It is held every 31st April after the harvesting season. The spirits of the dead are celebrated so that *they* can bless the harvest. One activity that the tourists usually do is jungle trekking around the village. Guided by a local guide, trekking up to the highest point at Gomantong Hill, visitors can see the scenic Mount Kinabalu, a World Heritage site, and the South China Sea. Visitors are also brought to the Torongkungan Beach. Besides enjoying nature, visitors also have the chance to see some interesting sights such as the beehives where the villagers get their honey supply. They are also treated to a demonstration of traditional animal traps, while visits to corn and paddy field and doing the rubber tapping at the rubber estate provide the local livelihood experience.

Figure 2
Map of Research Sites



Every villager is involved in every level of Bavanggazo Rungus Longhouse operations. At the operational level, there are men and women who work full time and part time for the longhouse and the children help out in any odd jobs in the spirit of *gotong royong*¹ and perform dances to the visitors. There is a weekly *gotong royong* for the whole village every Saturday. The operation has created a system where each family is delegated one job including landscaping, facility cleanliness, facility maintenance, lighting and bathroom cleanliness and maintenance. Each family has its own leader and committee. In the decision-making level, Bavanggazo Rungus Longhouse has its own committee. The committee consists of the chairman, deputy chairman, secretary, treasurer, committee member for cleanliness, *gotong-royong*, facility maintenance and maintenance (non-facility). Bavanggazo Rungus Longhouse operations have provided the villagers with employment opportunities. However, villagers still derive their main income from their main occupation, which is farming, while the longhouse work provides them with supplementary income. The average income from Bavanggazo Rungus Longhouse is around RM200 to RM500 per month depending on the season. A fund was created from the longhouse operations so that the villagers can get free-interest loan. Two percent of the profits from the operations are allocated for the welfare of the villagers.

The tourists that visit Bavanggazo Rungus Longhouse are from both domestic and international segment. Most of them are 'walk-in' tourists. Many international tourists come with tour operator or independent tourist guides. Foreign tourists usually stay overnight. Based on the survey conducted from 2002-2003, the tourists were mainly youths (less than 20 years old) and adult (31-40 years old). Most of them were educated, at least having secondary level qualifications (Pengiran Bagul, 2005).

Batu Puteh

Batu Puteh is situated along the main highway between the eastern Sabah cities of Sandakan and Lahad Datu. It is a 6-hour drive from the capital city and 2 hours from the east coast city of Sandakan. It has 1200-1400 people living there and generally there are more women than men. The

¹ *Gotong-royong* is a concept exclusive to the Malay world (Malaysia and Indonesia). It includes the whole of the village working together on a task voluntarily without expecting any monetary rewards.

exact population is hard to estimate since there are immigrants working at the palm oil plantation. The Orang Sungai ethnic group dominates the population and more than 90% of the population is Muslim. They speak the Sungai Language with more than 10 dialects. The Orang Sungai is popular with their unique stories and folklore and arts, especially the performing arts. The locals are involved in a number of economic activities such as working at the palm oil plantation. While some are working with the private and government sector, only a handful still work as a subsistence farmer/fishermen. The villagers' houses are mostly situated along the main road or the river. Most houses are wooden and simple. Most of the areas surrounding Batu Puteh are gazetted as wildlife sanctuary. Visitors to Batu Puteh can explore the Mengaris Trail. It joins the Mengaris and Batu Puteh villages, forms a loop starting at the Kinabatangan Bridge and wends along the riverbank back to the main road near the Batu Tulug Museum. Visitors can see wild plants among the cultivated orchard trees, animals and birds, as well as sites of historical and cultural interest along the way. Interesting flora such as edible medicinal plants including ferns and flowers and fruit trees can be seen along the fauna such as butterflies, birds and monkeys. There are also three age-old burial sites of families that settled in the area generations ago.

The coordinator for ecotourism and local community participation activity in Batu Puteh is MESCOT (Model of Ecologically Sustainable Community Tourism). It has supports from WWF Malaysia (Sabah), the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment of Sabah and Sabah Forestry Department. WWF Malaysia' role is to act as a facilitator for the local villagers in developing ecotourism products through training, awareness activities and initial networking with relevant organisations. MESCOT organises its activities within the sub-district of Batu Puteh. This includes four villages, which are Batu Puteh (village of the same name), Mengaris, Perpaduan and Paris. Under MESCOT, the Miso Walai Homestay project was started in 1997 and fully running from June 2000. Miso Walai Homestay is a registered association comprising the coordination committee and regular members who open up their homes to visitors, who stay and experience the local rural way of life. The locals can earn side income somewhere between RM1,500 to RM3,000 annually. Houses belonging to the locals are improved as they were renovated from the income received from the homestay.

MESCOT also coordinates the transport services including boat, handicraft and recreational ecotourism activities. It focuses on encouraging more ecotourists and responsible visitors. It hopes to reduce tourism pressures further downstream of Kinabatangan River while providing alternative and supplementary livelihoods to the local community (*pers. comm.* with MESCOT chairman, 2003). It encourages local people and the tourists to get involved in the conservation effort to the surrounding areas. The conservation-based activities include forest restoration, ecotourism, Phenological trails (a special trip to a site with outstanding beauty for education and awareness), nursery propagation, tree planting and silviculture. MESCOT is also making efforts in forest conservation and rehabilitation in the Lower Kinabatangan with the support of major multinational companies and international organisation from time to time such as RICOH, Shell and Discovery Channel. Shell, the oil company, contributes funding for building ecolodges and the maintenance of its surrounding forest reserve. RICOH, the camera company, is sponsoring the forest rehabilitation project.

On average, tourists come to Batu Puteh once a week. There has been a steady increase in the tourist arrivals over the years. Almost half of the tourists are 'repeat customers'. In its first year of operations, they had 1,200 bed nights and 2,600 visitors went for wildlife watching trips. They received walk-in tourists but there are more tourists in groups from the Fulcrum Challenge, Operations Wallacea, World Challenge, Intrepid Travel, Sabah Holiday and Pan Borneo. The marketing for Batu Puteh is targeted to groups rather than FIT. This explains the high number of group visitors compared to FIT (Free Independent Traveller) market. In 2001, they started the annual Kinabatangan River Expedition where participants stayed overnight with Miso Walai. Based on the survey conducted from 2002-2003, the tourists were mainly adults (21-40 years old) and educated at least from the secondary level (Pengiran Bagul, 2005).

Kampung Rantai

Three families who open paddy plantation at the area established Kampung Rantai in the 1950's. The village area is 11 acres including 3 acres that have been gazetted as a cemetery. There are three nearby villages: Kampung Dongiluang, Kampung Tiga and Kampung Bundu. The people are all from the Dusun ethnic group. Most of the villagers are self-sufficient farmers who plant paddy and ginger. While visitors can have a smooth drive from Kota Kinabalu on the highway to the town of Bundu Apin-Apin, the 12km road onwards to Kampung Rantai is rough gravel road. At present, there are 30 families living in Kampung Rantai. Kampung Rantai has a clean river running through it, the Apin-Apin River. However, a clean water supply is provided through the gravity pipe provided by the Health Department.

Ecotourism in Kampung Rantai was started in 1998. This is the youngest of ecotourism project among others. It was one of the community development projects in the village and it is also an effort to diversify from the dominant ginger farming. The villagers, with the help of a local NGO, Partners for Community Organisation (PACOS) and Sabah Foundation did a field study of ecotourism potential by assessing the resources around the village Kampung Rantai that is rich with natural attractions, including the waterfall and Rafflesia flower. Visitors are locals and the only overseas visitors that they receive are from Indonesia. Visitors are able to stay at the village through the homestay programme. In addition to staying with the villagers, the visitors can also experience the livelihood of the village. They are able to learn how to cook the local dishes and participate in the villager's activities. Cultural performances are shown on request. The homestay package, which includes accommodation and food, costs RM15 per night per person. The homestay fees go directly to the villagers. Among other sites in this research, this is the cheapest homestay by comparison. The villagers created and maintained traditional medicinal plant gardens as one of attraction in the village. Other attractions near the village are the agro-farm nearby where the deer farm is the highlight. The ecotourism in Kampung Rantai is focused on education and awareness, hence the adoption of homestay programme and the creation of traditional medicinal plant.

The ecotourism activity is also trying to conserve the water catchments at the surrounding area, which was threatened by the logging industry, causing the water to be turbid and less healthy for the people at the surrounding area especially for paddy field. The surrounding area of the water catchments was finally gazetted as Virgin Forest Reserve Class I. Before 2004, the ecotourism activity was interrupted for a while with the logging dispute that threatened the water catchments at the whole Bundu Apin-Apin area. The legal battle has dire consequences to the ecotourism activity in Kampung Rantai. It was virtually stopped while the legal battle was on as time and resources were devoted from ecotourism to the court.

In 2002, faced with a prospect of ecotourism growth, the villagers formed a society called MAMAKAT (Koisaan Misompuru Manampasi Koburuon om Koubasanan Tulun Toku/Rural Community Conservation, Development and Culture Cooperative Society). It was modeled after MESCOT in Batu Puteh. The society allows villagers to automatically become members of MAMAKAT led by a duly elected committee. One of the major activities that the MAMAKAT did was to organise an ecotourism workshop for the villagers with the participation of PACOS and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment. During the workshop, they discuss the direction of ecotourism that they would like to have, the opportunities that the villagers can have and discussion on the involvement and roles of the stakeholders in the industry. MAMAKAT also organised FAM (Familiarisation) trip to its members to educate them on the tourism operations. The villagers built MAMAKAT building, which has a community hall and an office. However, in the early part of year 2004, the villagers were locked in a legal dispute again when they found out that illegal logging are still in practice at the Virgin Forest Reserve.

There is no statistics compiled that shows the profile and number of tourists to Kampung Rantai by any authority. Therefore the only data of tourists are based on the data collected during the fieldwork, through survey and interviews. According to the fieldwork survey conducted in 2002 and

2003, the tourists were adults from 21-50 years old and educated. Most of the tourists were locals. The tourist normally visited the village either for recreation, business or VFR. Since the site is new and the marketing of the ecotourism is non-consistent with few interruptions with the legal battle, Kampung Rantai struggles to get tourists to the village. The village location, which is situated off the main road, also contributes to no 'walk-in' tourists.

Sukau

Sukau is located 70km up the Kinabatangan River from the east coast city of Sandakan. It is a small village surrounded by the Wildlife Sanctuary Area and palm oil plantations. It has a population of 2000 and most of the villagers are self-sufficient farmers and low ranking government servants. A number of youths are working at the eight ecolodges scattered around Sukau Village. The Sungai People inhabit the village and almost all of them are Muslim. Sukau is connected to the highway with a gravel road. Private transportation is infrequent. Another main transportation mode is by boat, which the villagers use to go to the Sandakan city or the neighbouring villages. Tourists started visiting the lower Kinabatangan, mainly the villages of Sukau, Abai and Batu Puteh, in the late 1980s. The number of visitors was small and infrequent. Sukau evolved into the main tourist attraction because of its proximity to the scenic Menanggul tributary where proboscis monkey can be easily spotted from a boat, and the historical Gomantong Caves where edible bird nests are collected.

The popularity of Sukau, where five tour companies currently operate lodges and river tours, is a good example of the ecotourism potential appropriately tapped. A number of ecolodges in Sukau employed the practice of ecotourism. Solar technology is used for generating electricity and hot water. Boats are operated by electric motor during cruises into the tributaries. Raw food materials are bought mainly from the locals and local boat builders and carpenters are hired. Voluntary activities are also organised such as clearing of weeds from oxbow lakes and supplying 49 units of water tanks to the local villagers. Sixty-four acres of degraded riverine forest were adopted for a reforestation project in collaboration with Sabah Wildlife Department, Forestry Department, the Rainforest Interpretation Centre, Drainage and Irrigation Department, Land and Survey Department, Rotary Club of Kota Kinabalu, Kinabatangan District Office and Partners for Wetlands Programme under WWF Malaysia. The pioneering lodge in Sukau won awards such as British Airways 'Tourism for Tomorrow' Award, International Hotel and Restaurant Association 'Environment Award', 'Green Hotelier' Award and Green Globe Achievement Awards.

However, there is a general agreement that the local community does not have a high level of involvement in the ecotourism industry, hence gaining low level of benefits. Despite the efforts that some ecolodges had initiated to involve the local community in their operations, the extent of the participation is limited. While a number of local youths are hired to work at the ecolodges, others employ non-locals. A meeting with the villagers in 2002 showed discontentment at the exclusion of the locals while the industry was visibly prospering.

Most of the tourists that go to Sukau are using the tour operators' services. They usually buy a tour package that has an add-on tour to Sandakan City and the nearby Gomantong Cave. Most of them choose the popular 3 Days 2 Nights package which consists of accommodation and food, a trip to Gomantong Cave, river cruises in the morning, evening and at night, and a lecture on ecotourism in the Kinabatangan Wetlands. Sukau enjoyed patronage mainly from foreign tourists (Fig. 5.9). They came usually through an outbound tour operator from their country of origin. There are also a segment of foreign tourists who are expatriate in Malaysia and its neighbouring country and considered as foreign tourists in the statistics. Tourists who have participated in ecotours at Sukau were mostly affluent Europeans, usually older couples (Yamashita, 1998). Domestic tourists that come to Sukau are not big in number compared to the foreign market. There are few local tourists who think a specialised nature-based tourism package such as ecotourism is interesting and worth paying (*pers. comm.* with STB, 2005).

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

The comparative analysis started with analysing the similarities of each sites. This is where the commonalities are found. The strengths (and weakness too) are found in these commonalities as well. A detailed description elaborates each point. Next, the dissimilarities are analysed and this is when each sites distinguished themselves through various features. This is where a clear distinction between sites is made, and it can be seen what features are an advantage to what sites.

Similarities

Based on the case studies, the location of the sites is far from the nearest city, at least one hour away by road or more than 50km away. Each site is located at rural area with outstanding nature environment with at least one outstanding geographical or natural feature such as river, mountain and flower. This is a strong point for all sites where they have the natural resources in the area, which is the main product of ecotourism. All sites are accessible by road and public transportation is available. However sites such as Sukau and Kampung Rantai has no direct public transportation services. So far, this does not hinder tourists from coming to Sukau, but it also does nothing to the frequencies of visitor to Kampung Rantai.

The ethnic groups residing at the sites are the ones that are generally known as the 'rural' folks or indigenous groups. All of the sites have a dominant ethnic group residing in the area. The ethnic groups that are found in the research sites are the Rungus people in Kampung Bavanggazo, the Sungai people in Batu Puteh and Sukau, and the Dusun people in Kampung Rantai. This is clearly an advantage to each site as all ethnic groups have distinctive cultures that are an attraction to the site. These cultures are still imbedded this culture in their identity and in their lifestyle.

The community at all sites is composed of mainly farmers and labourers. Some are government servants. The similarities are that they are all low-income earner. Looking at case studies, the ecotourism and local community participation advocates have a hand in the sites. It is a good reason to establish ecotourism and get the support from the local community. The local community accepted ecotourism and participate in its activities where the obvious benefits are secondary income. All of the job opportunities are small and mainly for secondary income.

All of the sites have their own infrastructures. These infrastructures exist from the product of *gotong-royong*, funding, or reinvestment of profit. These infrastructures are essential in the operations of ecotourism. Accommodation and shops are important in each site as they generate income. The size of these infrastructures is small to medium, suitable for the nature of ecotourism. Sites that have been operating for some time have better infrastructures than the new sites. Kampung Rantai has the least developed infrastructures among all sites.

All of the sites have their own natural attractions and site protection status. However each site has different types of products. The offer of natural attractions is the main element in the ecotourism operations. Some sites have the advantages over the others in terms of the quality of the natural environment. The sites in Kinabatangan Wetlands have high quality of product, as it is a high biodiversity area. Kampung Rantai has an iconic flora attraction that is the Rafflesia flower. Batu Puteh and Sukau have an iconic fauna attraction that is the Proboscis Monkey. These are important to give the marketing edge to the sites. In addition to that all sites offer ecotourism activity, which involves nature and culture, and the opportunity to learn and to enjoy them. The activity that involved the nature is mainly passive but the activity that involved the culture is mainly active.

All of the sites have their own cultural attractions. The cultures are based on the dominant ethnic group that lives there. Kampung Bavanggazo, Batu Puteh, Sukau and Kampung Rantai have more interactive/participative cultural attractions. These sites offer the experience of living together with the locals and have cultural showcases. Kampung Bavanggazo has the most distinct cultural

attraction in terms of its details. Tourists that came to Kampung Bavanggazo can experience the *actual* traditional culture and lifestyle of the Rungus people.

All of the sites have complementary/supporting attractions nearby. These are the add-ons attractions to the sites and it is important to add more pull factor for the tourists to the site and entice the tourists to stay longer. Kampung Bavanggazo, Batu Puteh and Sukau are a well-known ecotourism destination where most tourists will stay at least over night at the sites. They also have surrounding attractions, where it is complementary to the ecotourism products. Kampung Rantai also has few attractions nearby.

All sites have a major festival/event. Kampung Bavanggazo has its Magahan Festival, Batu Puteh has its Kinabatangan River Expedition, Sukau has its Kinabatangan Regatta and Kampung Rantai has its Harvest Festival. Most of the festivals are culturally based and has been celebrated even before the ecotourism started with the exception of Kinabatangan River Expedition and Kinabatangan Regatta. Both of this events are created and conducted for the tourism activity in both sites. The creation of events shows business savvy to the sites that are conducting them, as it becomes a pull attraction to the tourists.

All sites have policies and initiatives to contribute to the environment. First of all, some of the sites have an immediate stake in conservation. Kampung Bavanggazo and Kampung Rantai need conservation to safeguard their water catchments, which is the sole water supply to the villages. Batu Puteh pursued the reforestation programme to rejuvenate the forests that are lost to illegal loggings. All sites have some form of conservation efforts and projects going on in the area and the areas surrounding it.

Dissimilarities

The case study analysis also highlighted the dissimilarities of each sites. This is where the distinctive features of each site can be distinguished and advantages and disadvantages of each sites to the others can be interpret.

The cost to enjoy the site varies depending on the site. Kampung Bavanggazo, Batu Puteh and Sukau have the most comprehensive tourist package among all the sites. This is attributed to the fact that they have been operating for quite a while (Kampung Bavanggazo and Sukau started ecotourism in the early 90s when ecotourism was just starting) and Batu Puteh has professional consultation from WWF (Sabah). Kampung Rantai's ecotourism was slow to develop due to legal battle interruption with timber companies. The most expensive place to visit among all the sites is Sukau where the industry is monopolised by urban-based tour operator.

The level of community involvement varies from site to site. The highest involvement of community found in Kampung Bavanggazo and Kampung Rantai, where everybody in the community is involved in the operations of the ecotourism. Batu Puteh involved some part of its population with the MESCOT activities, where ecotourism is the main business. The lowest involvement is Sukau where the ecotourism industry is monopolised by the urban-based tour operator.

The average income per person gained from the ecotourism activity varies from site to site. There are usually not high as it is an income from secondary employment. The nature of the employment also the reason it is structured to be paid when there is a job, not on fixed monthly basis, with the exception of the very few full-time job in Sukau.

Only Kampung Bavanggazo, Batu Puteh and Kampung Rantai have a welfare fund specific for their community and their members. Sukau, on the other hand, has community development initiatives for the villagers. Welfare fund are used to assist members of the community that involved in the ecotourism operation when they need it. The funds sometimes are given as a soft loan for reinvestment, such as fixing houses to be certified as a homestay house. It is important to note that

Kampung Bavanggazo, Batu Puteh and Kampung Rantai have high level of community participation. A community development initiative is where the tour operator initiate social programme as part of their business activity, or as they like to say '*giving back to the community*'.

The type of tourists came varies by sites. Kampung Bavanggazo has a lot of FIT walk-in and group overnight tourists. This is attributed to its popularity as the renowned tourism site in Sabah and the channel that the tourist came with. Batu Puteh has many tourists in groups from links with certain travel groups and volunteers groups. Tourists that go to Sukau are usually in a tour group using a tour package from tour operator both inbound and outbound. Locals are the main type of tourists that go to Kampung Rantai, usually for business and VFR.

Decision-making varies from site to site, depending on the form/nature of organisation in each site. Committee-run sites are Bavanggazo Rungus, Miso Walai Homestay and Kampung Rantai. The similarities of these sites are, the community mainly runs them. Sukau ecotourism industry is dominated by business operations and the industry direction influenced greatly by the business community.

CONCLUSION

The case study analysis shows more similarities rather than dissimilarities between and among four sites. The most obvious are the nature and characteristics of the sites (location, environment, communities, infrastructure, conservation efforts and site protection status), funding and assistance received and job opportunities. This is consistent with the general ecotourism characteristics, and that is a small-scale operation; the products offered are nature-based with some level of involvement from the local community where benefits channelled to the local environment and economies (Lash, 1998; Honey, 1999; Wearing, 1999; Wood, 2001). It is important to note that all sites with the exception of Sukau received some form of funding and assistance. This raises the question on the viability of the ecotourism operation in these sites. It is not known whether without funding and assistance from outside agencies, these ecotourism sites would attain the same degree of success in terms of management, use of resources, profit, logistics and the like. The dissimilarities are on the type of packages offered by each site hence the type of tourists that come to each of the sites, level of community involvement, creation and dispersion of benefits and previous community participation project involvement differ. Even with a lot of similarities, the nature of operation individualises each site.

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