SUCCESS INDICATOR FOR SABAH'S ECOTOURISM SITES

TSHIN LIP VUI

FACULTY OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND ACCOUNTANCY
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
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## FACULTY OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND ACCOUNTANCY
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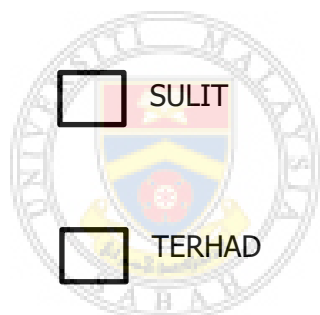
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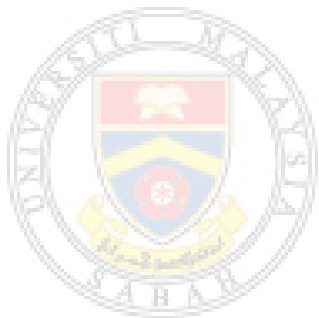**Tandatangan Pustakawan**

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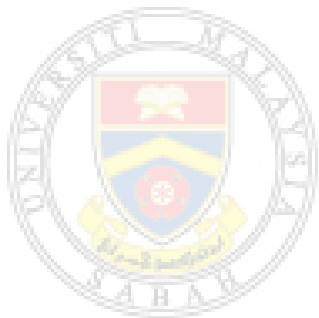
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                                                DB1521032T

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NAME : **TSHIN LIP VUI**

MATRIC NO : **DB1521032T**

TITLE : **SUCCESS INDICATORS FOR SABAH'S ECOTOURISM SITES**

DEGREE : **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHIE**

FIELD : **TOURISM MANAGEMENT**

VIVA DATE : **26 JULAI 2019**

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ABSTRACT

The state of Sabah is the second largest state in Malaysia after Sarawak with which it shares its borders on its southwest region. Sabah also shares its borders with East, it is also known as Sabah, negeri di bawah bayu which mean Sabah, land Kalimantan of Indonesia in the south while the other cardinal directions face the South China Sea. The capital of the state of Sabah is Kota Kinabalu, formerly known as Jesselton during British rule. As it is located under the typhoon prone region of the Phillipines below the wind. Sabah geographical structure is a mix of mountainous regions, beaches, and tropical rainforests. The tropical rainforests of Sabah include the Kinabalu National Park which was declared as a World Heritage Site in 2000 due to its ecological diversity. Sabah is rich with many different cultures and traditions. It's being home to about 2.9 million people with more than 30 ethnic groups. It is also known as one of the twelve mega-diversity sites in the world with its rich living heritage, ethnic makes it ideal for the ecotourism industry. Sabah enjoys a steady flow of eco-tourists from domestic and international markets with a gradual increase in the number of visitor arrival each year. Sabah's ecotourism is categorized by its natural attraction, wildlife, and wilderness habitats. This paper sets out to interpret and develop the indicators for success ecotourism sites in Sabah and measures its' development stage. The long-term viability of tourism can be assured only when the limitations and favorable opportunities of the overall environment for tourism development are understood and ways to measure changes induced by tourism are identified and applied. This thesis applied qualitative methods which can help researchers to understand how and why such behaviors take place. The data were then analyzed to get the results, which are success indicators of ecotourism sites based on the perception of stakeholders. There are two sets of indicators are proposed. The indicators are quite consistent with those others drawn from the literature review. The analysis also shows that there are issues that need to be addressed about these indicators. These indicators are output-based; therefore there is a need to establish the measurement or the parameters of these indicators to make it more quantifiable and more meaningful. Another aspect that the thesis identified is that the success level of each ecotourism site. The different development levels of ecotourism sites will use different strategies in their management. At the end of the thesis, the level of site development will be linked to Butler's Model to determine the success level of the ecotourism sites. This will contribute to a tourism literature review by enhancing the knowledge of ecotourism, and to the ecotourism industry by providing a means of ecotourism success.

ABSTRAK

INDIKATOR-INDIKATOR KEJAYAAN UNTUK TAPAK EKO PELANCONGAN DI SABAH

Negeri Sabah merupakan negeri kedua besar di Malaysia selepas Sarawak di mana ia berkongsi sempadan berdekatan dengan rantau barat daya. Sabah juga berkongsi sempadan dengan Kalimantan Timur, Indonesia di sebelah selatan manakala arah kardinal yang lain adalah berhadapan dengan laut China Selatan. Ibu negeri kepada Sabah adalah Kota Kinabalu, sebelum ini, ia dinamakan sebagai Jesselton pada zaman jajahan British. Memandangkan ianya terletak di bawah kawasan laluan angin taufan negara Filipina, ia dikenali sebagai Sabah, land below the wind bermaksud sabah, negeri di bawah bayu. Struktur geografi Sabah adalah gabungan kawasan pergunungan, pantai dan hutan hujan tropika. Hutan hujan tropika di Sabah termasuk Kinabalu national Park telah dinobatkan sebagai Tapak Peninggalan Warisan Dunia pada tahun 2000 dan terkenal dengan kepelbagaian ekologinya. Sabah merupakan sebuah negeri yang kaya dengan budaya dan tradisi. Ia juga menjadi tempat tinggal bagi 2.9 juta dan lebih dari 30 kumpulan etnik yang berlainan. Ia juga dikenali sebagai salah satu daripada dua belas kawasan mega-diversity di dunia dengan kekayaan kepelbagaian warisan kehidupan dan etnik menjadikannya sesuai untuk perkembangan industri eko pelancongan. Sabah menikmati aliran perkembangan eko pelancong yang stabil dari pelancong tempatan dan pelancong antarabangsa dan bilangan pelancong yang datang kian meningkat pada setiap tahun. Eko pelancongan Sabah boleh dikategorikan dari segi tarikan semula jadi, hidupan liar, dan habitat hutan belantara. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menginterpretasi dan membangunkan petunjuk-petunjuk untuk beberapa tapak eko pelancongan yang berjaya di Sabah dan mengukur tahap pembangunannya. Pelancongan yang berjangka panjang akan dapat dikekalkan apabila batasan dan peluang yang berpotensi bagi keseluruhan persekitaran untuk pembangunan pelancongan difahami. Dengan melalui kaedah pengukuran perubahan yang disebabkan oleh pelancongan selepas dikenalpasti dan diaplikasikan. Tesis ini mengaplikasikan kaedah kualitatif di mana dapat membantu para penyelidik lebih memahami bagaimana dan mengapa tingkah laku tersebut berlaku. Data tersebut kemudiannya dianalisis untuk mendapatkan keputusam, di mana keputusan tersebut merupakan petunjuk kejayaan bagi tapak eko pelancongan berdasarkan persepsi pihak berkepentingan. Terdapat dua set petunjuk yang dicadangkan dalam kajian ini. Petunjuk-petunjuk ini sangat konsistensi dengan penyelidik sebelum ini dari tinjauan literatur. Analisis ini juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat beberapa isu yang perlu ditangani berkaitan dengan petunjuk ini. Petunjuk-petunjuk ini adalah berdasarkan pemahaman luar. Oleh itu, petunjuk-petunjuk ini perlu membangunkan garis ukuran ataupun parameter untuk menjadikan petunjuk-petunjuk tersebut menjadi lebih bermakna. Satu lagi aspek yang telah dikenalpasti adalah tahap kejayaan setiap tapak eko pelancongan. Tahap pembangunan yang berbeza setiap tapak eko pelancongan akan menggunakan strategi yang berbeza dalam pengurusan mereka. Pada akhir tesis ini, tahap pembangunan akan dikaitkan dengan Model Butler untuk menentukan tahap kejayaan tapak eko pelancongan. Keputusan kajian akan menyumbang kepada tinjauan kajian pelancongan dengan meningkatkan pengetahuan eko pelancongan, dan industri eko pelancongan bagi maksud kejayaan eko pelancongan.

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BEDM	-	The Business of Ecotourism Development and Management
C & I	-	Criteria and Indicators
CBET	-	Competence Based Education and Training
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	-	Gross National Product
IRG	-	The International Resource Group
IUCN	-	International Union For Conservation
MOTAC	-	Ministry of Tourisn, Arts and Culture
NGO	-	Non-Government Association
RIMP	-	Redang Island Marine Park
SAFODA	-	Sabah Forestry Development Authority
SEDUE	-	Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology
TALC	-	Tourist Area Life Cycle
TIES	-	The International Ecotourism Society
UNEP	-	United Nations Environment Programme
UNWTO	-	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WCU	-	World Conservation Union
WTO	-	World Trade Organization
WWF	-	World Wide Fund

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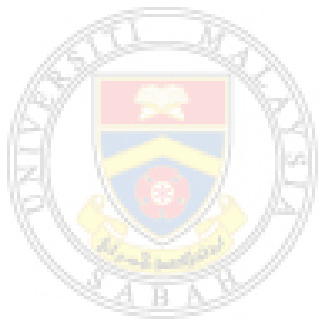
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of this research on the implication of indicators for Sabah's ecotourism sites. This chapter identifies the problem statement, research questions, research objectives and the significance of the study.

1.2   Overview

Tourism is the world's largest industry, it accounts for more than 10% of total employment, 11% of global GDP and total tourists' trips are predicted to increase to 1.6 billion by 2020 (WWF, 2001). As such, it has a major and increasing impact on both people and nature (WWF, 2001). The effects can be negative as well as positive. Inappropriate tourism development and practice can degrade habits and landscape, reduce natural resources, and generate waste and pollution (WWF, 2001). In contrast, responsible tourism can help to generate awareness and support for conversation and local culture and create economic opportunities for countries and communities (Pengiran Bagul, 2009). Tourism is a global industry with a bearing on the lives of millions of people. Its potential as a tool for development is enormous. With a growing interest to spend leisure time in nature and increasing awareness of environmentalism, ecotourism has become one of the fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry (United Nations, 2001). Compared with mass or 'old' tourism, ecotourism more benefits out of the country, by creating local employment, and fostering sustainable development (Belsky, 1999). Thus, it has been popularly promoted as a means of reconciling wildlife conservation with economic development, particularly in developing countries (Campbell, 2002).

Ecotourism is characterized by its natural attractions, wildlife and wilderness habitats. Many countries favor ecotourism as a form of economic development as it is perceived as a low impact form of tourism (Pengiran Bagul, 2009). Ecotourism operations are generally small-scale, so they are relatively easy to set up. Carefully planned and operated ecotourism sites, especially if it is village-based and includes local participation, is able to provide direct benefits that might offset pressure from other less sustainable activities that make use of natural and cultural resources (Pengiran Bagul, 2009).

Ecotourism is a frequently debated term. The approached used simply to identify a form of tourism where the motivation of visitors and the sales pitch to them, canters on the observation of nature. Increasingly, this general sector of the market is called 'nature tourism'. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES, 1990) defines that 'true ecotourism' requires a proactive approach that seeks to mitigate the negative and enhance the positive impacts of nature tourism. TIES also define ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local peoples. This definition not only implies that there should be a recognition of and positive support for the conservation of natural resources, both by suppliers and consumers, but also that there is a necessary social dimension to ecotourism (Pengiran Bagul, 2009).

The long-term viability of tourism can be assured only when the limitations and favorable opportunities of the overall environment for tourism development are understood and ways to measure changes induced by tourism are identified and applied. According to Buckley (2008), ecotourism is not usually associated with a large number of visitors; its development in a given community over a long period of time can lead to a number of changes that may negatively affect the community's social, cultural and economic life and its natural environment. These changes might not be conspicuous, especially if the number of visitors is small or if ecotourism activities are not causing any substantial impacts. However, these types of changes tend to accumulate slowly and gradually over course of weeks, months or years and can ultimately bring about huge and irreversible changes in the environment, deteriorating the living conditions of the local community. This is why it is essential that these changes be regularly observed and monitored to project future changes,

follow trends of development, and establish controls and possibilities for the regulation of undesirable processes (Buckley, 2008).

Impacts can only be detected as a change relative to a prior baseline. Even indicators that measure environmental quality rather than environmental impacts can only be used for management if there is a benchmark to compare them against (Popova, 2003). Benchmarks are also needed if environmental degradation or management at one park is to be assessed in a national, regional or global context and if indicators of different types are to be aggregated to yield an overall comparative measure of environmental quality, impact or management performance, they must first be expressed as numerical measures with similar means range, variance and normalization against a benchmark is generally the first step. Standardization can be useful in comparing different indicators against each other, for example, to determine which changed the most or the fastest. Aggregate indices complied from a suite of standardized indicators are useful for comparisons between parks in the same geographic region or legal jurisdiction; for comparison between regions and countries; and for tracking trends over time whether locally or globally. The availability of baselines or benchmarks or the feasibility of establishing them is hence a significant consideration in selecting specific indicators or tourism impacts in parks (Buckley, 2008).

1.3   Research Background

According to Popova (2003), the long-term viability of tourism can be assured only when the limitations and favorable opportunities of the overall environment for tourism development are understood and ways to measure changes induced by tourism are identified and applied. This is why it is essential that these changes be regularly observed and monitored to project future changes, follow trends of development, and establish controls and possibilities for the regulation of undesirable processes (Popova, 2003).

Sabah, one of the states in Malaysia, is keen on developing ecotourism. The introduction of ecotourism in Malaysia and Sabah in the early 90s led to the development of Sabah ecotourism guidelines a few years later. Faced with an encouraging prospect, Sabah decided to position itself as nature and culture

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destination and came up with a theme, 'Sabah Natur(e)ally' at the beginning of the millennium (Pengiran Bagul, 2009).

Recently, the term 'ecotourism' has become the new catchword in Sabah's tourism development. The State Government has identified ecotourism and/or nature-based tourism, particularly in the Lower Kinabatangan, as one of the major development areas generating revenue and at the same time diversifying Sabah's economy. The promotion of ecotourism in Sabah is intimately linked to the conservation of biodiversity, especially in the form of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, but it is lacking in terms of promoting "community-based ecotourism" (Sabah Development Corridor, 2007).

A narrow definition of 'ecotourism' used by policymakers in Sabah has created a debate within the framework of "sustainable development". The problem is how to conserve nature while conflicts, with illegal logging and hunting, deforestation, water pollution, poverty and marginalization of local people existing in this ecotourism destination the project of community-based ecotourism must be taken seriously into consideration by the Sabah's State Government to achieve what many scholars have described as "sustainable development" or "a sustainable community development" (Hussin, 2006).

Sabah was known as the land below the wind and has abundant natural attractions such as hills, forests, rivers, beaches and islands which are important assets for developing nature-based tourism and ecotourism. The promotion of ecotourism in Sabah is intimately linked to the conservation of biodiversity, especially in the form of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries, but it is lacking in terms of promoting "community-based ecotourism" (Sabah Development Corridor, 2007). The Chief Minister of Sabah wants tour operators to step up efforts to increase the number of international tourists coming to Sabah. The Chief Minister said, "there are 3,684,734 people have visited Sabah in 2017 compared with only 3, 7980,031 in 2016" (Borneo Mail, April 2018).

There is a number of studies on local participation and success ecotourism. Community participation is very much emphasized and encouraged, with many academics agreeing that it is a critical component for ecotourism success. Research showed that the success of ecotourism depends largely on the success of local

community participation. However, Pengiran Bagul (2009) stated that the success of ecotourism is not only depended on the participation of the local community and it's divided into four aspects; economic, cultural, social and environmental and is measured by the achievement of the outcomes.

According to White, McCrum, Mlacktock, and Scott (2006), indicators of ecotourism should provide a continual assessment of the overall sustainability of a system and the indicators themselves will require constant review and updating over time, as changes occur; implementing indicators is a dynamic process. The set of impact and success indicators of ecotourism is an instrument that assists in better understanding the impact of ecotourism on the environment. By monitoring these indicators, one can evaluate whether the overall objectives for ecotourism are being met (Popova, 2003).

Success is often perceived as objective criteria subject to quantifiable analysis. Success in the ecotourism sense is mainly based on the desired outcomes and achievements. Many ecotourism writers deal with the outcomes of ecotourism, either positive or negative. The positive outcomes are usually viewed as successful scenarios or best practices. This gives some ideas on how success is viewed by writers in the tourism literature. Success, in this sense, is grounded in the perception of individuals (Pengiran Bagul, 2009).

There are other previous studies that have developed similar success indicators, Pengiran Bagul (2009) in his research revealed 21 indicators and divided into four categories of stakeholders' local community, Government, Non-government and business and tourist for five ecotourism site in Sabah. Popova (2003) stated that ecotourism's indicators grouped into three impacts, there are social-cultural, economic and ecological or physical.

Based on the content of the indicators, most of the sites have suggested indicators that are dominated by business-based indicators. Pengiran Bagul (2009) suggested that ecotourism success is based on what it achieves in site operations. This is based on the aims and objectives of ecotourism, either in general or specific to a site, and how well the aims and objectives have been achieved. Success is also based on an individual's perceptions, be it the government, tourist or local community.

1.4 Problem Statement

Tourism has become an economic growth engine and vehicle for development in the region. This has not come without negative impacts particularly in mass tourism destinations but fortunately, 'nature-based' and 'eco' tourism have also seen rapid growth. Nature-based and adventure tourism is growing annually by 10-30% since 1996, currently accounting for up to 25% of the world's tourism market according to the UNWTO. This provides an argument to minimize impacts of mass tourism in areas with high conservation value and invest instead in the preservation of natural areas and support for community stewardship over their reefs and coastal environments (WWF, 2016).

Therefore, the set of impact and success indicators of ecotourism is an instrument that assists in better understanding the impact of ecotourism on the environment. By monitoring these indicators, one can evaluate whether the overall objectives for ecotourism are being met. To define whether a given region is sustainable in terms of tourism development impacts, a number of indicators are needed showing the relationship between tourism activities and the capacity of the area to sustain these impacts.

Indicators help resource managers and others to identify how communities change as a result of tourism development. Ecotourism is associated with the most valuable natural and cultural sites and phenomena in a given destination. Damage to these resources will undoubtedly be followed by economic losses for those whose live hoods depend on tourism and by ecological and social losses for the whole local community. Thus, it is critically important for ecotourism to be developed in harmony with the environment, and businesses should play a leading role in establishing sustainable ecological and economic practices.

The studies on the success indicators of the ecotourism industry and ecotourism sites are even more limited. Some studies that focus on success indicators are not specific to the ecotourism field, but rather on general tourism areas or some other specialized field such as sustainable tourism (WTO, 1996). Therefore, the measure and indicators that are available n tourism literature do not capture the intention of this research. However, they are useful in giving guidelines to the research.

Another issue is interpreting and developing the indicators for the success of ecotourism sites in Sabah. Ecotourism's success is generally indicated by the health of its business operations since it is very much a business in nature. Other general success indicators are the positive impacts that it brought to the area and its community. A set of indicators for ecotourism sites success that are based on this issue is valuable to the industry in reviewing their current plans and policies, and is useful in monitoring and evaluating current ecotourism projects.

WTO (1996) stated that ecotourism is believed to be the fastest-growing tourism segment and it's difficult to measure. MacCallum (2013) recognized that there is no simple way to present a short set of measures that are suitable and acceptable for application by all countries. The future development of indicators presents a real opportunity for members and partners to take direct action in moving the measurement agenda forward to the benefit of all countries and to do so in collaboration with existing measurement sources.

Pengiran Bagul (2009) stated that his research has identified that the indicators developed are output based and need to have some level of measurement to make it more meaningful. Therefore, one of the issues in the research limitation is the measurement of indicators. Some of the sites shared the same in indicators but the case studies have shown that different areas have different environments that contribute to different degrees of success. The differences in the degree of success need to be identified and further developed so that the indicators have some sort of measurement that can be used in practice.

1.5   Research Questions

In Sabah's ecotourism context, a few studies have been contributed to their success indicators to Sabah's ecotourism sites such as Sukau, Kampung Batu Puteh and Sabah's National Park a few years ago. However, ecotourism is the fastest-growing segment in the tourism industry and difficult it's to measure. Success indicators developed are output based and need to have some level of measurement to make it more meaningful. The tourism industry keeps changing and moves fastest and some indicators may not suitable to apply nowadays.

Based on the research issue above, four key research questions emerge. There are:

1. What makes a site qualified as an ecotourism site in the context of success in ecotourism sites?
2. What are the indicators to determine the ecotourism sites success?
3. What are the level of ecotourism site success?
4. What are the links between success and the stages of Tourist Area Life Cycle Model (TALC)

1.6   Research Objectives

This research aims to discover new indicators for success ecotourism sites. Butler's model will be used in this study to determine the level of evolution of the ecotourism sites. These study objectives that are derived from the research questions can be achieved in completing the research tasks. There are:

1. To explore the key indicators that determine the ecotourism site in the context of success in ecotourism sites.
2. To develop the indicators for ecotourism sites success.
3. To explore the level of ecotourism sites' success.
4. To investigate the link of ecotourism success with the Tourist Area Life Cycle Model (TALC).