

**SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES
THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM FOR
SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN LOWER
KINABATANGAN, SABAH**



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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

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KINABATANGAN, SABAH**

VELAN A/L KUNJURAMAN



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UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

**THIS IS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HUMANITY
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH
2020**

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material in this thesis is my own except for quotations, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

Community-based ecotourism (CBE) projects in developing countries are often claimed as a means to achieve sustainable livelihood for the local communities in rural areas, particularly in Malaysia. On the other hand, CBE is also continuously promoted as economic and local community development tools by the Malaysian government and several policies have been formulated to achieve these missions. However, empirical studies related to social transformations of local communities through CBE projects in Malaysia is scarce in order to explore the extent CBE projects have successfully transformed the local communities upon their continuous active engagement. For this reason, two CBE projects in Lower Kinabatangan, Sabah, which have been managed by the local communities since the 1990s were selected as case studies. The aim of this study is to examine the social transformations of local communities through CBE projects in the Sukau and Bilit villages of Lower Kinabatangan in the economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects. The qualitative research approach using the case study research strategy was adopted in this study. In order to collect primary data, methods such as in-depth interviews, direct observation and secondary data resources were applied this study. From the qualitative analysis of the two cases, the study discovered that CBE project participants in Sukau and Bilit have successfully transformed their lives in economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects through their active participation in CBE projects. The study noted that the positive social transformations of CBE in Sukau and Bilit outnumbered the negative social transformations of CBE. The success of these social transformations aspects have contributed to the livelihood enhancement of the local communities in the study sites. However, CBE as a means for sustainable livelihood in both villages is still unclear and questionable due to the negative social transformations of CBE and the challenges faced by the local communities in ecotourism operation. The thesis concludes that CBE is an appropriate pathway to enhance local communities' livelihoods in both study sites but recognition of the identified challenges is required and they need to be addressed. Thus, this study has recommended proactive measures and appropriate policies are required to ensure for sustainability of the CBE projects in both villages by the relevant stakeholders in Sabah, Malaysia. Thus, this study has recommended proactive measures and appropriate policies to ensure the sustainability of the CBE projects in both villages by the relevant stakeholders in Sabah, Malaysia.

ABSTRAK

TRANSFORMASI SOSIAL KOMUNITI SETEMPAT MELALUI EKOPELANCONGAN BERASASKAN KOMUNITI UNTUK PENGHIDUPAN LESTARI DI HILIR KINABATANGAN, SABAH

Projek Ekopelancongan berasaskan komuniti (CBE) di negara sedang membangun sering dianggap sebagai aktiviti ekonomi lestari kepada komuniti setempat di kawasan luar bandar khususnya di Malaysia. Selain daripada itu, CBE juga sering dipromosikan sebagai alat pembangunan ekonomi dan komuniti oleh kerajaan Malaysia dan beberapa polisi telah diperkenalkan untuk mencapai misi tersebut. Walaubagaimanapun, kajian berkaitan dengan transformasi sosial dalam kalangan komuniti setempat melalui ekopelancongan kurang dilakukan untuk mengenalpasti sejauhmana projek CBE berjaya mentransformasikan komuniti yang terlibat secara aktif. Atas alasan ini, dua projek ekopelancongan telah dipilih sebagai kajian kes yang diusahakan oleh komuniti setempat sejak tahun 1990an. Kajian ini dilakukan untuk memeriksa transformasi sosial dalam kalangan komuniti melalui projek ekopelancongan dalam aspek ekonomi, socio-budaya dan alam sekitar. Pendekatan kualitatif berasaskan teknik kajian kes telah diaplikasikan dan kaedah-kaedah seperti temubual mendalam, pemerhatian langsung dan sumber data sekunder telah digunakan untuk mendapatkan data bagi kajian ini. Berdasarkan kepada analisis dua kes projek ekopelancongan, kajian ini telah dikenalpasti bahawa kesan positif transformasi sosial ke atas komuniti oleh ekopelancongan mengatasi kesan negatif yang telah dikenalpasti. Selain itu, kajian ini mendapati bahawa projek CBE memberi sumbangan kepada tahap peningkatan sosio-ekonomi dalam kalangan komuniti setempat yang terlibat. Walaubagaimanapun, CBE sebagai penghidupan lestari di kedua-dua kampung masih tidak jelas dan boleh didebatkan disebabkan oleh kesan negatif transformasi sosial oleh CBE ke atas komuniti yang terlibat dan cabaran-cabaran yang dihadapi oleh komuniti. Tesis ini akhiri dengan pernyataan bahawa CBE merupakan alat yang sesuai untuk menambahbaik penghidupan komuniti di kedua-dua Kawasan kajian tetapi pengenalpastian cabaran-cabaran di atas perlu diberi perhatian dan ia perlu dibendung. Oleh itu, kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa langkah-langkah proaktif dan polisi yang berkaitan diperlukan untuk memastikan kelestarian projek ekopelancongan di Sabah oleh pihak berkepentingan.

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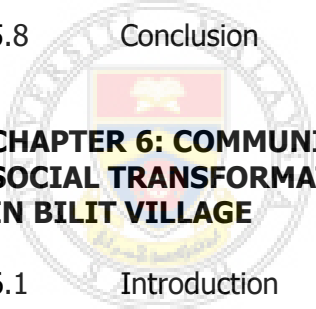
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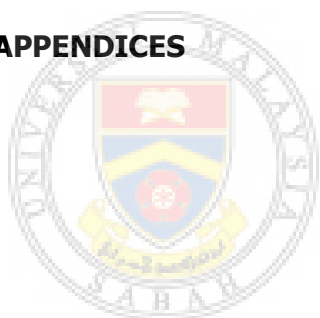
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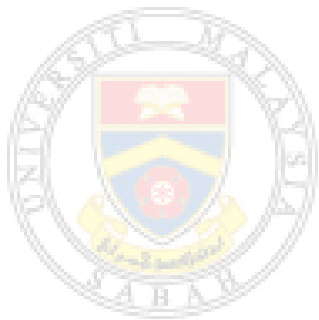
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIM	-	<i>Amanah Iktihar Malaysia</i>
CAGR	-	Compound Annual Growth Rate
CBE	-	Community-based ecotourism
CBT	-	Community-based tourism
DOSM	-	Department of Statistics Malaysia
EPP	-	Ecotourism Project Participants
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	-	Gross National Income
GOM	-	Government of Malaysia
GTC	-	Global Tourism Conference
HDI	-	Nations Human Development Index
HUTAN	-	Kinabatangan Orang-utan Conservation Programme
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
IMF	-	International Monetary Fund
IUCN	-	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
JKKK	-	<i>Jawatankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung</i>
JOST	-	Journal of Sustainable Tourism
KePKAS	-	Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment Sabah
km	-	kilometer
KOPEL	-	Batu Puteh Community Ecotourism Co-operative
LKWS	-	Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary
MDGs	-	Millennium Development Goals
MESCOT	-	The Model for Ecologically Sustainable Community Tourism Project

MOTAC	-	Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia
MPKK	-	<i>Majlis Pengurusan Komuniti Kampung</i>
NGOs	-	Non-Government Organizations
OED	-	Oxford English Dictionary
PATA	-	Pacific Asia Travel Association
PES	-	Payments for Environmental Services
PRSP	-	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAPs	-	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
SEARRP	-	South East Asia Rainforest Research Partnership
SFD	-	Sabah Forestry Department
SLA	-	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
STB	-	Sabah Tourism Board
STCSD	-	International Conference on Social Transformation, Community and Sustainable Development
SWD	-	Sabah Wildlife Department
TDC	-	Tourism Development Corporation
TIES	-	The International Ecotourism Society
UK	-	United Kingdom
UMS	-	Universiti Malaysia Sabah
UNDP	-	United Nation Development Programme
UNWTO	-	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WCED	-	The World Commission on Environment and Development
WDM	-	World Development Movement
WTO	-	World Trade Organisation
WWF	-	World Wide Fund for Nature

4IR - Fourth Industrial Revolution

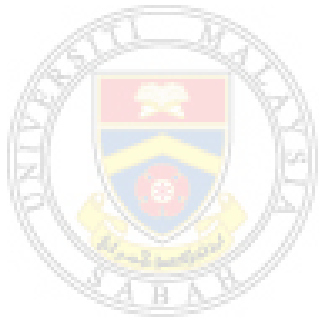
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CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT, RATIONALE AND SCOPE

1.1 Introduction

Tourism, a word very familiar in country development plans around the world, is proven to contribute to the country's economic development. Tourism is not only a means for a country to generate its economic revenues, but also for the local community to use it as an alternative livelihood approach for their development. Community development through tourism has been recognised as an important transformation agenda in development plans in many developed and developing countries including Malaysia. Malaysia is very serious in formulating and introducing interventions which focus on community development issues. In fact, tourism has been considered as one of the platforms or mechanisms to alleviate poverty among the less fortunate rural community as well as their development. The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (henceforth SLA) has been recently used to assess rural community development through tourism activities in many developing countries such as Taiwan and others. The utilisation of SLA in the context of tourism in rural areas in the world is useful to assess the rural community development claimed by many previous literatures. Consequently, this research used SLA as study framework based on two case studies of rural communities in Sabah, Malaysia. Section 1.2 illustrates the background, context and rationale for undertaking the research. It includes the background of tourism development in Malaysia, the justification of case studies selection, and the gap in the literature.