Responsible Tourism, Destination Sustainability and Quality of Life: A Preliminary Finding

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Abstract: Apart from the positive economic impact, tourism also gives negative impact to destinations, affecting their environmental and socio-cultural elements of communities living in the areas. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, therefore, sustainable tourism should utilize the optimal environmental resources that are key elements in tourism development, maintain important ecological processes and also help conserve natural resources and biodiversity. Due to several sustainability challenges, responsible tourism was introduced to enhance current sustainable tourism development. The principles of responsible tourism are developing a win-win situation between minimizing the negative effects and benefiting the host community and contributing positively to the preservation of nature and culture. This paper presents a preliminary finding on the relationship between responsible tourism and quality of life as well as the relationship between destination sustainability and quality of life. The researcher used an online survey as the method of data collection and data was analysed using SPSS. The results showed that responsible tourism and destination sustainability had a significant relationship with quality of life. From the results, it indicates that implementation of sustainable practices are important for a good quality of life among local communities.

Key words: Responsible tourism • Destination sustainability • Quality of life • Local community

INTRODUCTION

In the 20th century, tourism development was aided by the globalization of capitalism, population movements and the advancement of transportation and communication technologies [1]. Tourism is a worldwide phenomenon that has the highest aspirations of all people and sensitive to nature and culture. It has also been a major socio-economic force in both developing and advanced markets. In almost every country in the world, tourism is a potential source of economic development and makes it an important part of strategic planning efforts [2]. Although it is an important element of political and socio-economic development in many countries, it is uncertain whether tourism contributes positively to socio-economic and cultural achievement or environmental degradation and loss of local identity. Almost every member of the destination community is influenced by tourist actions and tourism business activities through a wide range of social, economic and environmental impacts [3]. This trend is leading to increased availability and demand for environmentally, economically and socially responsible products. Thus, responsible practices are important because all the resources need to be developed and maintained responsibly to achieve sustainable development for tourism.

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destinations [4]. Although responsible tourism has become an established field of tourism research and practice that is generally understood as a broad set of tourist interactions with engagement and benefits for local communities in a way that minimizes negative social and environmental impacts [5], most of the studies regarding responsible tourism studies were conducted on the perceptions of tourists or the service providers only (e.g., [6]; [7]; [8]). Thus, the objective of this paper is to examine the perception of local community on responsible tourism, destination sustainability and quality of life in Cameron Highlands.

**Literature Review**

**Responsible Tourism:** [9] stated that responsible tourism, such as sustainable tourism, undermines assumptions about the need for endless development and the competitive extraction of maximum revenues in the short term. Responsible travel is about responding, taking responsibility and taking action to address the ongoing social, economic and environmental issues that arise at the destination [10]. Responsible tourism labels are the industry's most popular term although they share many similarities with sustainable tourism, eco-tourism, ethical tourism and other forms of social-conscious tourism practices. Responsible tourism was focused on the responsible use of tourism products, each of the impacts and benefits of tourism, should be on the environment and the local community, economically, socially and environmentally [11].

From another researcher's perspective, responsible tourism can be defined as a tourism initiative to achieve good tourism business opportunities through better vacation experience, quality of life among local people, socio-economic benefits and protection of natural resources in tourism destinations [6]. Indirectly, responsible tourism will give benefit to local people by providing better living conditions through local economic development. [12] stated that, perceived responsible tourism is an assessment of local communities who are living in tourism destinations and they recognize that those involved in tourism initiatives must incorporate environmental and ethical responsibilities in the management and operation of their tourism business. Based on [13], responsible tourism can be grouped into four categories such as social responsibility, economic responsibility, environmental responsibility and cultural responsibility.

**Destination Sustainability:** Tourism destinations are larger integrated space, which is built on the integrity of tourism in the concept of cumulative attraction which, due to the impact they offer and their additional tourism infrastructure, make it a focal point for tourism [14]. [15] states that the universal goal of any tourism destination in both developed and developing countries is to develop sustainable tourism while remaining competitive. As [16] point out, the development of destinations for tourism must be sustainable, not only economically and ecologically, but socially, culturally and politically as well as competitively.

The destination has faced some issues related to sustainability [17]. In destinations where the effects of intensive tourism are experienced, local cultural degradation or traditional lifestyle takes place and historical sites are subject to physical damage as a result of congestion. In this context, sustainable development strategies outline two key issues that are future planning, taking into account the needs of successful generations and conservation of resources. The concept of sustainable tourism destinations has emerged from the need to develop sustainable tourism in destinations [18]. There is no definition of sustainable tourism destination as each destination has unique characteristics [19] and in each sustainable development, the destination is different [18].

However, [18] claims that there are two aspects of the definition of sustainable tourism destinations that are both limited and holistic. Limited definitions include the management of all resources devoted to and only involved in tourism. The holistic definition of sustainability has the potential to promote a more synergistic understanding of the social, environmental, economic and cultural indicators of tourism destinations and how each of these factors leads to a more sustainable tourism destination. Sustainable development of tourism destinations has the potential to influence all aspects of management, operations and value creation, demonstrating the need to implement market orientation [20].
Quality of Life: According to [21] quality of life means good living. Living a good life is like living high quality. Quality of life can also be broader than happiness and involves several factors such as happiness and achievement. [22] also stated that quality of life is a rich concept in which different perspectives can be researched such as health approach, needs approach, happiness versus life satisfaction and resource management approach. The concept of quality of life is related to an understanding of people's satisfaction with the circumstances in which they live [23]. [24] states that tourism can improve the quality of life in many forms such as rest, relaxation, recreation, knowledge development and a sense of beauty, aesthetic sense, cultivation and more.

However, the quality of the concept of living is not to be confused with the concept of living standards based on [22]. As [25] first suggested, there are eight domains of quality of life that seem to capture research bodies that are emotional and psychological well-being, material well-being, personal development, physical well-being, self-determination, individual control and decisions, social inclusion, dignity and values and rights, including privacy. Subsequently, [26] argues that quality of life can be categorized into five areas including material well-being, social well-being, emotional and health well-being and well-being.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In achieving the objective, this study uses a quantitative methodology. As for preliminary finding, a self-completion questionnaire was developed and was sent to respondents via online survey. The respondents of this study were local communities who live in Cameron Highlands. Cameron Highlands has the largest and most extensive network of townships to be found among the highland destinations in Malaysia. The questionnaire for this study consisted of four sections which are section A for demographic profile, section B for perception on responsible tourism, section C for perception of local community on destination sustainability and lastly section D for perception of local community on quality of life. The questionnaire was close-ended questions and in dual language, English and Malay language.

RESULTS

Demographic Profile: As shown in Table 1, 73.3% respondent were from Tanah Rata sub-district, 23.3% from Ulu Telum and only 3.3% from Ringlet. Table 1 also revealed that 60% respondent were female and 40% were male.

Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient: In order to identify the potential relationships between the variables, the correlations between the variables were analyzed. The Pearson’s Correlation test is one of the important test to measure the linear relationship between two variables. Table 2 indicated that there is a relationship between responsible tourism and quality of life since r-square is -0.139. The positive and negative sign on the correlation coefficient does not describe the strength of the relationship but only shows the relationship between two variables. Thus, it proves that responsible tourism practices are a predictor of overall quality of life among local community in Cameron Highlands.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulu Telum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanah Rata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringlet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Respondent Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Frequency (n=30)</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sub District</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulu Telum</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanah Rata</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>73.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringlet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 2: Relationship between Responsible Tourism and Quality of Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TRT</th>
<th>TQOL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRT</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TQOL</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>-.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson correlation coefficient in Table 2 shows that there is no significant relationship between responsible tourism and quality of life. The significant value also shows less than 0.05 (p<0.05). Thus, it indicates that responsible tourism initiative gives an impact on quality of life among local people.

DISCUSSION

Overall, this study shows that local communities perceive responsible tourism, destination sustainability and quality of life have a significant relationship because quality of life is derived from destination sustainability and responsible tourism initiatives. As mentioned by [27], implementing the principles of sustainability is the best way to protect tourism destinations from social, cultural and environmental deterioration. Therefore, well-planned tourism activities can increase income and be a source of wealth for the local community.

Other than that, based on a previous study done by [28], findings indicate that local authorities, local communities and NGOs, as well as tourists mostly agree that agro-ecotourism can bring economic sustainability to the Cameron Highlands and the country. Rapid development and uncontrolled use of land are thought to harm environmental sustainability, especially on the terrain and local climates as evidenced by rising temperatures. The results provide a brief overview of the need for Cameron Highlands to succeed with proper planning; in this regard in agricultural and tourism decision making. It is important for all stakeholders to regularly discuss key issues and play a role in ensuring sustainability in highland development. Other than that, a study conducted by [29] aimed at studying the social impact of the agro-tourism industry on urban dwellers in Cameron Highlands shows that urban residents positively and negatively affect agro-tourism and development activities in Cameron Highlands. Therefore, proper planning and policy are crucial in managing agro-tourism and related development in Cameron Highlands.

A grounded model study conducted by [30] investigating the factors that influence tourist satisfaction in visiting highland tourism destinations, shows that five key themes emerge from the analysis, which are tourism development impact, sustainable development impact, environmental impact, education factors and tourist satisfaction. This study
confirms that tourism development, environmental impact and education factors are important factors that influence the satisfaction of highland tourists. [30] also mention that educational factors play an important role in conserving and preserving the environment through community awareness programs. Thus, proper sustainable development through education centres will be able to give information before traveling for tourists, educating them to avoid dangerous activities that may affect the environment.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the development of Cameron Highlands, especially in tourism and agriculture is crucial to economic growth, especially in Pahang. However, serious attention and action should be taken to avoid the risk of floods that have plagued many lives and property [31]. As mentioned by [32] many environmental problems arise due to the increase in agriculture and tourism. Due to the lack of land and poor regulation, new hotels and farms were placed on steep slopes, which led to erosion. Thus, the region needs a master plan that will enable the development of agriculture, tourism and recreation while maintaining important features in the highlands and preventing environmental disasters. Environmental authorities should also participate in sustainable development programs by defining forests as protected areas, law and legal enforcement, as well as community awareness of environmental programs to residents [30]. Therefore, sustainable agriculture and the environment are capable of conserving and preserving highlands, so that aesthetic value can still be enjoyed by future generations. Thus, in order to provide good quality of life among local community, implementation of sustainable practices is needed.

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REFERENCES