Framework Considerations for a Sustainable Eco-Culture Tourism (ECT) Development for Orang Asli of Royal-Belum-Temenggor Forest Complex, Perak

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Introduction

This is the subsequent paper of “Sustainable Eco-Culture Tourism in Royal Belum-Temenggor Forest Complex, Perak: Emerging Prospects and Challenges for Orang Asli” (presented during morning session)

Primary focus → to present and discuss the framework considerations for a sustainable eco-culture tourism (ECT) development for Orang Asli communities of Royal Belum-Temenggor Forest Complex (RBTFC) in Perak → review of literature on key success factors of sustainable ECT + inputs from the survey of local stakeholders in RBTFC.
Previous studies carried out by Kamarudin et al. (2014); Razak et al. (2014); Abdullah et al. (2013); Ang and Chan (2009), have identified Royal Belum-Temenggor (RBT) as crucial tourism destination for the northern region of Malaysia.

Combination of tourism resources/attractions/products from the pristine tropical rainforest + unique local Orang Asli culture, presented an opportunity for the development of sustainable eco-culture tourism (ECT) in RBT.
Review of literature → to date → there is no specific research work has been done specifically on formulating a suitable framework for planning and development of sustainable ECT.

Without/with the absence of this framework:

1. Potential risk of planning and development process undermining the area’s true potentials (if not, misleading potential tourism stakeholders or investors) for sustainable tourism development Twinning-Ward (2007).

2. In the long run, it could impose constraint to relevant authorities/stakeholders in monitoring the tourism performance including identification of components that require urgent improvement actions (Kamarudin, 2007).
Figure 1: Key success factors for sustainable ECT

- A local champion breeds local champions
  - Positive qualities of a local champion
    - Ability to transform the community
    - Risk takers (after gauging viability)
    - Elected / self-appointed spokesperson / dedicated / voluntarily
    - Leadership & ‘local champion’

- Strategic partnership
  - Government
  - NGOs
  - Universities
  - Tourism industry
  - Specific bureaus

- Phase 1: community organisation in initial stage
- Phase 2: community organisation as ECT matures

- Community organisation

- Key success in sustainable ECT projects
  - Delivering quality
  - Adopting an integrated approach

- Product development
  - Activities
  - Accommodation facilities
  - Basic facilities
  - Maintenance
  - Accessibility and connectivity

- Destination management (Authenticity, Education, Entertainment, Enjoyment, Memorable)

- Product quality
- Service quality
- Marketing and promotional strategy

- Integration with other economic sectors
  - Small & medium enterprises
  - Agriculture
  - Building & construction
  - Transport
  - Shops & food stalls
  - Fish & animal farms

- Training ground
  - Entrepreneurship in ECT
    - As owner
    - As employee

- Integration with conservation, sustainable development and responsible tourism projects
Factor 1: Presence of a strong local leader (local champion)

A local champion breeds local champions

Positive qualities of a local champion

- Ability to transform the community
- Risk takers (after gauging viability)

Elected / self-appointed spokesperson / dedicated / voluntarily

Leadership & ‘local champion’
Factor 2: Having a good and effective ECT organisation

- **Strategic partnership**
  - Government
  - NGOs
  - Universities
  - Tourism industry
  - Specific bureaus

Phase 2: community organisation as ECT matures

Phase 1: community organisation in initial stage

Community organisation
Factor 3: Integrating ECT with other economic activities

Integration with other economic sectors

- Small & medium enterprises
- Agriculture
- Building & construction
- Transport
- Shops & food stalls
- Fish & animal farms

Training ground

- Entrepreneurship in ECT
  - As owner
  - As employee

Integration with conservation, sustainable development and responsible tourism projects
Figure 2: Integration between tourism and other economic activities.
Source: Research fieldwork in 2014.
Factor 4: Delivering quality in ECT products and services
Communication with stakeholders and government task force

Getting started
Preliminary planning
Strategizing
Authoring

Feedback
Monitoring

Figure 3: Five stages of sustainable ECT planning process
Figure 4: Proposed framework for a sustainable ECT
### Stage 1: Getting Started
- Determine community needs and readiness
  - Resources (culture/heritage/nature)
  - Community attitude
  - Local knowledge and skills
  - Available capital (financial strength)
- Educate and prepare the community for ECT
  - Potential tourism activities to be developed & promoted
  - Linkages with surrounding tourism attractions
  - Organising workshop on the involvement of different sectors in the community
  - Identify training need & training module development
  - Study trips & “community to community” training
  - Training manual formulation

### Stage 2: Preliminary Planning
- Identify local leadership & “local champions”
  - Visionary
  - Disciplined
  - Proactive
  - Innovative
  - Sensible
  - Patient
  - Dedicated
  - Resilience
- Establish ECT organisation
  - Initial stage: drawing solely from talents within the host community
  - Mature stage: maintain community structure while seeking professional help
  - Identify roles of organisation (empowerment of women and youth)
  - Formulating a common vision but realistic targets
  - Community fund establishment

### Stage 3: Strategizing
- Establishment of partnerships:
  - With government agencies
  - With tourism industry
  - With NGOs
- Adoption of integrated approach
  - With conservation, sustainable development and responsible tourism
  - With other economic sectors
- Plan and design quality products
  - Product development
  - Service quality
  - Destination management
- Identify market demand and marketing strategy
  - Matching the product with potential market
  - Understanding the channel of distribution
  - Embrace ICT as promotional tool
  - Identify potential tour operators and ground handlers
  - Setting up an in-house travel agency
  - Leveraging on awards certification to shape the branding
- Development of indicators to measure the impacts
Stage 4: Authoring

ECT plan implementation
- Construction of ECT facilities
- Involve or empower community in implementation
- Secure the funds in facilities construction
- Enhance existing skills and acquire new skills

Stage 5: Monitoring

Performance monitoring
- Using indicators to monitor ECT performance
- Conducting monitoring on regular basis
“In order for sustainable tourism to be achieved, one must measure what they manage” (Graci and Dodds, 2010: 186)

Many scholars in tourism (see Kamarudin, 2013; Graci and Dodds, 2010; Twinning-Ward, 2007; Miller and Twinning-Ward, 2005), have highlighted the importance of measuring of tourism performance as a means towards achieving sustainability goals.

Looking at ECT from a more holistic context → sustainability goals cannot be realised without first putting in place all the crucial elements – in a more systematic way i.e. having a framework for guiding the planning, development and management processes.
Thank you

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