

The Development of Community-Based Ecotourism Destinations at Gua Musang, Kelantan

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ABSTRACT

Ecotourism is one of the tourist attractions at Gua Musang. Gua Musang is a hotspot for tourists seeking to experience tropical flora and fauna. The purpose of the research is to explore the development of Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) destinations at Gua Musang, Kelantan. The goal of the study is to identify the potential of Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) products or destinations at Gua Musang that can be developed as an ecotourism attraction and examine the strategic approach that was taken by the local government to promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) products or destinations at Gua Musang. The primary and secondary data for the study will be collected by using interviews and case studies. The respondents for the interview are the Gua Musang State Officer, the KESEDAR Officer, the Gua Musang Chief Village, and the locals. For the duration of an interview, the researcher will take 30 minutes or one hour for a section interview. The data will be recorded in audio and text. The research conducted can be used in the future by the government or as a research reference.

Keywords: Community-Based Ecotourism, Gua Musang, Kelantan

INTRODUCTION

Due to globalization, tourism has contributed a considerable amount of revenue, accounting for 12% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Dudic, 2020). In places with limited growth prospects, tourism may be a driving force for economic development. Tourism, on the other hand, contributes to the depletion of regional resources; it accounts for 5% of global carbon emissions, for example. Mass tourism has a detrimental influence on both natural resources and the cultural identity of a place (Dudic, 2020). Other than that, this research also

focuses on the growth of community-based ecotourism (CBE). If created and run responsibly, community-based ecotourism (CBE) may benefit the community, environment, and economy (Mustafa, 2020). Community-based ecotourism (CBE) is defined as rural, sustainable tourism that has a positive impact on rural livelihoods (Kim, 2019). Community-based ecotourism (CBE) aims to conserve the environment while also strengthening communities by giving them some influence over tourism programmers and their outcomes (Masud, 2017). Kelantan is a state in Malaysia situated on the east coast of the peninsula, bordering Thailand. Alternative names for Kelantan include Tanah Serendah Sekebun Bunga, Negeri Cik Siti Wan Kembang, and Serambi Mekah. Kelantan's capital city is Kota Bharu. Kelantan is the oldest state in peninsular Malaysia. Kelantan has much to offer in terms of arts, culture and heritage tourism, ecotourism as well as cross border tourism. Kelantan has a natural asset whose cultural traditions, heritage, and unique values are practiced by the local communities, making Kelantan a hotspot for visitors who are interested in Kelantan's heritage and culture.

The main objective of this study is to identify the potential of developing Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) products at Gua Musang, Kelantan. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To identify the potential of Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) products or destinations at Gua Musang that can be developed as an ecotourism attraction.
2. To examine the strategic approach taken by the local government to promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) products or destinations at Gua Musang.

Significance of the Study

National Tourism Policy (2020-2030)

The research proposal supports the Nation Tourism Policy (2020-2030), which can assist the government in improving potential product Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) through the National Tourism Policy (NTP) (National Tourism Policy, 2020). It is to harness the competitiveness of Malaysia's tourism industry in an increasingly competitive and uncertain world by increasing revenue, securing partnerships and investment, empowering local communities, and ensuring sustainability (National Tourism Policy, 2020).

East Coast Economic Region (ECER) Master Plan 2.0 (2018-2025)

East Coast Economic Region Development Council (ECERDC) is planning sustainable Community-Based Ecotourism initiatives in the region while keeping in mind the need to protect and conserve the natural environment and cultural assets. While constructing or upgrading tourism facilities for visitors' convenience and comfort (East Coast Economic Region, 2018). The research proposal is supporting the ECERDC to continue preserving and conserving ECER's natural resources while also adding economic value and improving the community's quality of life in the identified locations.

National Ecotourism Plan (NEP) 2021-2025

The research proposal is supporting the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (MOTAC) to implement the plan strategically for the future. For example, the National Ecotourism Plan was

also introduced as a way to strengthen eco-tourism development in Malaysia by focusing on eco-tourism site conservation.

Majlis Daerah Gua Musang (MDGM) Strategic Plan

The research proposal is supporting the Majlis Daerah Gua Musang (MDGM) to achieve its vision and mission. The MDGM is planning to build resources and infrastructure tourism with environmental conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Provision of Ecotourism

Ecotourism has the ability to encourage sustainable behaviour, community economic benefits, and environmental preservation. Ecotourism is defined as travel to relatively undeveloped natural destinations with the intention of educating about, admiring, and able to enjoy natural settings and diverse wildlife in the ecosystem, as well as learning about environmental culture and history, all of which can lead to environmental conservation (Lee, 2007). The term "ecotourism" refers to tourism that is carried out properly in order to protect the environment and the well-being of local people (Hunt, 2015). Ecotourism is a reflection of the community, culture, economy, and environment of the area. It not only provides a solution for long-term social, economic, and environmental development, but it also fosters natural and cultural diversity (Osman, 2018).

Furthermore, the destination's service provider partners are typically small, locally owned businesses. Then it reduces detrimental effects on the natural and social environments. World Tourism Organization of the United Nations (UNWTO, 2013). The characteristic promotes the preservation of natural areas that are used as ecotourism attractions by providing economic benefits to host communities, organizations, and authorities that manage natural areas for conservation purposes, providing alternative employment and income opportunities for local communities, and raising awareness of natural and cultural assets among both locals and tourists. World Tourism Organization of the United Nations.

Community-Based Ecotourism

Community-based ecotourism (CBE) is a kind of ecotourism that focuses on the development of local areas and gives residents significant influence and participation in its creation and maintenance, with the bulk of the benefits remaining in the community (Denman, 2001). Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) is the channel via which the client is introduced to the product. It guarantees that local populations are involved and gives a plethora of options for meetings and interactions with tourists. Furthermore, CBE may assist local communities through a number of activities such as cultural shows, souvenir sales, tourist guides, general merchants, and environmental and cultural asset protection (Aseres, 2015).

According to the previous study, the feature of ecotourism is determined by two factors: experiential characteristics and education, which includes aspects such as interpretation of the natural environment and cultural manifestations (Sardiana, 2015) Sustainability is a hallmark of Community-Based Ecotourism, according to prior research. The World Commission on

Environment and Development defined sustainability as addressing current demands while not jeopardizing future generations' ability to meet their own (Sardiana, 2015).

The previous researcher stated that community-based ecotourism (CBE) is critical to the fundamentality of active participation of local people in the tourism development process, in order to minimize negative social, cultural, environmental, and economic effects through local control, and to maximize local benefits through further implementation of tourism initiatives (Sakata & Prideaux, 2013). Participation of local communities in Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) allows individuals to participate in the decision-making process for the generation and equitable distribution of economic benefits (Yanes, 2019).

The Potential of Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) Products or Destinations that can be Developed as an Ecotourism

Community-based Ecotourism (CBE) is an increasingly popular approach to ecosystem conservation across developing countries. It has been recognized for its potential to become an effective method for addressing myriad socio-ecological issues and thereby ensuring greater sustainability in managing natural resources (Stronza & Gordillo, 2008). According to a number of recent studies, community-based ecotourism (CBE) development has the ability to favourably transform community perspectives on how natural and cultural resources are used (Stone, 2015). For example, research has shown that CBE platforms are used domestically in a variety of African, Latin American, and Asian nations (Baktygulov & Raeva, 2010).

CBET has the potential to bring numerous socio-economic benefits to the Islanders in terms of generating foreign exchange, creating local employment, stimulating national and local economies, fostering international peace, and increasing environmental awareness and education, according to previous research conducted in the case of Puerto Princesa, Palawan Island in the Philippines (Andrea & Jugmohan, 2008). According to earlier research, Rafflesia in Lojing has the potential to be promoted as a worldwide tourism destination for visitors to Kelantan (Azlan, 2011). Ecotourism is the community's primary source of revenue as well as its primary activity, with 70 per cent of families participating in tourism-related activities at Agua Blanca. Community-based ecotourism (CBE) has increased consumption and quality of life while also improving community organization, reducing emigration, and improving environmental conservation (Ballesteros, 2011).

The Best Strategic Approach Taken by the Local Government to Protect or Promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE)

Local government must upgrade tourist attractions and share regional tourism information both at home and abroad in order to boost regional tourism. (Ishikawa and Fukushima, 2007). Tourism is seen as a tool to grow the economy by local governments, regardless of their political affiliation. They seek to find materials and create images that might be used for tourism to contribute to local income production and economic growth, as well as to benefit them socially and politically, based on this idea. (Ballesteros and Ramirez, 2007).

A priority policy is to improve skills for working in ecotourism development projects. To meet market demands, training institutions should expand their capacity, and men and women working on ecotourism development plans should be encouraged to provide high-quality

service that meets the needs of both the community and tourists. United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2013). The CBE strategy should assist the community in reclaiming historical practices, revitalizing productive activities, and emphasizing the population's ethnic background, harkening back to the community's history and distinct qualities, such as architecture, cuisine, music, and handicrafts. The World Tourism Organization of the United Nations (UNWTO, 2013).

Ecotourism resources must be managed sustainably to maintain their long-term survival and continuity. These regulations should cover how to plan and manage activities in natural areas in a way that ensures visitor satisfaction while also protecting fragile natural sites and their biodiversity, waste management, and use intensity control, all while emphasizing the area's unique features, such as topography, climate, natural elements, and protected areas. Only by coordinated planning and management can these unique assets be preserved for current and future generations. (OECD, 2010). Expanding and developing new items, as well as diversifying regional distribution, will help to expand the product base. Aside from that, local cultural practices should be emphasized so that communities can legitimately share their traditions and customs with tourists. (OECD,2010).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design & Strategy

This study uses a qualitative methodology approach, which, expressed in words, is also used to understand a concept, thought or experience. In addition, the analysis obtained will provide information on Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) destinations at Gua Musang.

The researcher's research design is the framework for the methodologies and approaches he or she will use. The research design aids researchers in the formulation of successful studies by assisting them in the development of suitable research procedures for the subject matter (Veal, 2006). Other than that, the researcher will apply the qualitative method to collect data on Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) at Gua Musang, Kelantan. Qualitative research is used to evaluate the link between gathered data and observation based on statistical equations, as well as to examine the importance and perception of complex social phenomena like the essence of human experience (Veal, 2006).

Sampling Strategy

Then, for the data collection and analysis progress, the sampling strategy is fine-tuned (Farrugia, 2019). The sampling strategy is the plan put in place to ensure that the sample utilized in the research study is representative of the population taken from. In terms of sampling, any study's participant selection technique should be woven into the overall reasoning (Punch, 2004). The researcher will use qualitative research in this project. Furthermore, the purposive sample in this study will be chosen by the researcher based on what the researcher believes is appropriate for the study. The intentional selection of a participant based on the features and attributes that someone possesses is known as purposeful study, also known as judgment sampling (Etikan, 2016).

Purposive sampling was used to select respondents who were most likely to give appropriate results (Palinkas, 2015). The researcher's decision to use a purposive technique is based on the concept that, given the study's goals and objectives, specific types of people may hold diverse and relevant perspectives on the ideas and issues in concern and, hence, must be included in the sample (Robinson, 2014). For example, the researcher is doing a study-based development of community-based ecotourism (CBE) products and destinations in Gua Musang.

Data Collection Method

Methods that were used in this study were the duration method and secondary data. The qualitative method in this study was a method that was done by interviewing some potential respondents who have authority at Gua Musang.

Table 1: Duration method/One-to-one interview table

Potential Respondent	Duration / Approach
Gua Musang State Officer	2
Local Communities	8
Local Guides	2
TOTAL	12

They have more knowledge of the history, culture and exotic places of Gua Musang. Besides that, secondary data is the data that has already been collected through primary sources and made readily available for researchers to use for their own research. It is a type of data that has already been collected in the past.

Data Analysis Process

Data analysis is a process of gathering and analyzing useful and relevant information or data that can be obtained from the process of data collection in order to make a decision by own values. Data may be examined on a thematic basis utilizing an open, axial, and selective coding system, according to Benner (1985). The analytical approach of this study was done by interviewing the locals and the people who have the authority in Gua Musang. Another approach was to search for information about Gua Musang using secondary data such as journal articles, books, websites, and newspapers. This study also has accurate data. By having accurate data, the data could be used to identify the potential and strategic approach that could be used to develop Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) at Gua Musang. There were some processes of data analysis that needed to be considered in this study in order to have accurate data that was cleaning the data. This was crucial in the early step of the study before the core analysis in order to remove erroneous data and to prevent flawed analysis results. Having the data cleaned up will result in the data being organized and this would avoid any mistakes in this study later on.

FINDINGS

Table 1: The Potentials of Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) Products or Destinations at Gua Musang that can be Developed as an Ecotourism Attraction.

Research Questions	Theme
What are the characteristics of Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) products or destinations at Gua Musang?	<p>Theme: Identifying the potential of Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) products or destinations at Gua Musang that can be developed as an ecotourism attraction.</p> <p>Respondent 1 and 5 said that the potential product or destination to develop in Gua Musang as ecotourism destination is Lojing Highland as it has Rafflesia flower and it is the most popular ecotourism product because of the curiosity of the tourists that want to know more about the exotic flower and it also is protected by the local guide and local communities, so the life cycle of the Rafflesia flowers can be preserved in a long time for the visitors to view them.</p>
Is there any main potential for Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) products or destinations at Gua Musang that can be developed as ecotourism attractions?	<p>Respondents 2 and 6 said that the potential product or destination in Gua Musang that can be developed as an ecotourism attraction is Hot Spring Ber at Lojing Highland as it has a nice environment and the hot spring, the main attraction of the place is the hottest hot spring in Kelantan with 72 Celcius degree.</p>
What are the best strategic approaches taken by the local government to promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) products or destinations at Gua Musang?	<p>Respondent 3 stated that the cave of Gua Chiku is a potential product for the Gua Musang Community-Based Ecotourism because of the uniqueness of the cave, which has seven floors and rock formations that resemble the shape of some animals such as elephants, frogs, and lizards. It also gained massive popularity due to being viral on social media despite being a new tourism attraction that was just opened to the public in 2020 before the pandemic hit the country.</p> <p>Respondent 4 made a point where the potential product for the Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) in Gua Musang is the Taman Negara Kuala Koh because the tourists can have a different lifestyle and experience the nice natural environment. Besides, the tourist can do some activities at Taman Negara Kuala Koh such as kayaking, jungle trekking, and swimming in the river.</p> <p>Respondent 7 made a statement that the potential product for Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) in Gua Musang is Tasik Ketitir. The lake is the focal point of the local community for sightseeing, leisure, and enjoyment in a clean and pleasant setting. Tasik Ketitir, a former mining site near Gua Musang, has recently been transformed into a leisure park.</p> <p>Respondent 8 said that the potential product for the Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) in Gua Musang is Hentian Eco R&R Lojing. It was built for the tourists to have their rest stop during their visit to the ecotourism attraction at the Lojing. It is also located nearby highway and mountain that have beautiful view.</p> <p>Respondent 9 said that the potential product for the Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) in Gua Musang is Gua Madu. It has a unique limestone cave found in Gua Musang which is rich in river resources and surrounded by green forests. Gua Madu is also suitable for villagers and tourists to do recreational activities. On the wall of this cave, there are beehives and honey bees. Due to that, the cave is called Honey Cave.</p> <p>Respondent 10 said that the potential product for the Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) in Gua Musang is Moonriver Lodge. Tourists that visit Gua Musang may stay at Moonriver Lodge, which is a homestay or hotel. They may gather in the lovely space while taking in the fresh air and admiring the beauty of the surrounding trees and flowers. For their convenience and pleasure, a parking space and a garden are offered.</p>

Table 2: The Strategic Approach That Was Taken by The Local Government to Promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) Products or Destinations at Gua Musang.

Research Questions	Theme
What is the latest strategy implemented by the local government to promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE)?	Theme: The strategic approach that was taken by the local government to promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) products or destinations at Gua Musang. The first respondent answered that the latest strategy implemented by the local government to promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) is "Rafflesia Conservation Area" was chosen because it represents a significant finding of natural resources. Gua Musang District Council manages this conservation area. Since this significant discovery, travelers have been introduced to the notion of eco-tourism, which has breathed new life into the rehabilitation and protection of the Lojing region while the second respondent answered that the latest strategy implemented by the local government to promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) is by trying to do improvement at Gua Chiku because it has many characteristics that can attract the tourist. It is a chance for the local government to help and protect the natural caves.
Do the promotion strategies will make new changes to the Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) at Gua Musang?	Both respondents agreed to the second question as they both believed that the promotion strategies can attract tourists, thus encouraging the government to build more facilities for tourism attractions.
Do you agree or disagree that Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) will raise the economy in future? Why?	Both respondents also agreed to the third question that CBE will raise the economy in the future because the income would generate more projects for the government to improve the facilities and expansion of the ecotourism attractions, thus creating job opportunities for the local communities to handle the management of the ecotourism attractions and facilities.
As the Gua Musang State Officer, how far the Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) can be protected?	Both respondents agreed that CBE can be protected for a long time and the government has to make sure to help and give the opportunity to the local community to protect the ecotourism resources and well-being alongside the government.
Do you think the strategic approach was taken by the local government to promote Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) at Gua Musang can successful or not?	Both respondents agreed that the strategic approach that was taken by the local government to promote CBE at Gua Musang can be successful because the ecotourism destination has their own uniqueness and the government have used many promotions platform like official websites and Facebook pages to promote the ecotourism and they have built many facilities for the comfortableness of the tourists.

Limitation

There were some limitations in this study and one of those was respondents. In this study, no respondent can answer the interview questions because the researcher only chooses the specific respondents like the local community, local guide, and the state government. Besides that, some respondents are afraid of the researcher due to the pandemic Covid-19 so they think the interview session is not suitable to implement in the research paper.

The limitation of this study is the respondents do not have more information about the potential of Community-Based Community (CBE). For example, several respondents are not familiar with the ecotourism destination so they are avoiding answering the interview questions. This also become one problem for the researcher when it comes to providing the data for the finding. Next, some respondents have different levels of education. This also gives a disadvantage to the researcher because the respondents cannot express their idea clearly, and the answers that they gave is very short such as yes or no and some descriptions.

The data collection method is also one of the limitations of this study. In this study, the researcher goes to survey the potential Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) destination in Gua Musang with the team members to collect the data. The limitation of the research is the interview method using more time and money in order to gather data because the interview session took time around 20 minutes to 30 minutes for one respondent. The researcher also needs to find consistent respondents to answer the interview questions. The potential of the CBE destination also needs to be researched before the researcher goes to visit the place.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Overall, ecotourism may provide a unique experience for everyone, and as locals are aware, there are many things available in Gua Musang if it is investigated. Apart from that, if the government plays a role and the locals willing to provide good cooperation, the development of ecotourism sites in Gua Musang would be more extensive. The research finding for this research study showed that some of the tourist attractions were not well-maintained, their reputation and popularity could be boosted by making them viral on social media and some irresponsible companies would take the advantage to expand their business even if it would harm the natural environment in the tourist attractions. The development of community-based ecotourism destinations in Gua Musang is particularly desirable for ecotourism companies and ecotourism destinations for future development in Gua Musang, according to the findings of this study.

Furthermore, tourism-related stakeholders should consider how to sensitively incorporate the socio-cultural past and present of ethnic-based attractions into tourism planning, development, and operation, as well as how to present the community's current development stage to outsiders so that the community does not become trapped in a frozen image of itself.

The recommendation is to create a community product. The product is certainly one of the most significant parts of community-based tourism. You'll need a local excursion or activity that provides insight into the local community's daily lives while also educating tourists about their culture. Then, the local community can introduce handcrafted products from Kuala Koh's Orang Asli and every tourist attraction in Gua Musang. Tourists always hire local guides from the village, as they are the best guides because they know everything there is to know about the town. For example, every cave that you want to enter, such as Chiku Cave, Musang Cave, Honey Cave, and places that are difficult to enter, such as the Rafflesia Conservation Park of the Lojing Highlands.

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