

Involvement in Agro-tourism Activities among Fishermen Community in Two Selected Desa Wawasan Nelayan Villages in Malaysia

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Abstract

The agro-tourism activity in *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* is a new product of agro-tourism in Malaysia organized by Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia. Local community involvement is important to the success of this agro-tourism programme. The main objective of this paper is to investigate the level of involvement of *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community in agro-tourism activities. The data of this study is obtained from a survey of two *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* villages. A total of 220 respondents were randomly selected to answer the questionnaire and the data was analyzed using the SPSS software. Based on this study, the overall mean score for level of involvement in agro-tourism activities in both states were moderate. However, both villages were found to have the highest mean score on involvement in environmental conservation activities and about their concern on the cleanliness of their village. The study recommends that more efforts should be taken by *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* community to be involved in agro-tourism activities that will significantly impact the local economy, social, and environment, and as a result will empower and support the cohesion of the community.

Keywords: agro-tourism, fishermen community, development

1. Introduction

Agro-tourism refers to the leisure activities organized by farming communities for tourists (Eduardo and Francisco, 2006). Generally, agro-tourism includes activities such as visiting the farms and villages to see the beauty of local culture and also participate in farming daily activities. According to Richard and Hall (2000), the farming communities have the potential to become famous destinations as a natural landscape or factor in attracting the tourists to an area. Life style of different groups of people from one area to another can be a unique tourism product. Agro-tourism is the focus of this study because it is considered as one of the tools that can contribute significantly on rural communities. In this paper, the focus is on the fishermen community.

Malaysia has numerous tourist attractions and agro-tourism is one of the products for tourist destinations. The *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* agro-tourism is coordinated by the Fisheries Development Authority of Malaysia (LKIM) to promote activities held among local fishermen communities towards change and development as well as to create an attractive and beautiful fishing village as tourism destination in the effort to improve local economy among the fishermen communities. In addition, it could stimulate positive values among the communities such as mutual help, teamwork and cleanliness. Doubtlessly, it is able to transform the fishermen village as a model for agro-tourism centers throughout Malaysia (LKIM, 2007). The efforts to create a developed fishermen communities are not confined to fishermen as it includes the involvement of the whole community.

Community involvement in agro-tourism program is an important element. Tosun (2000) mentioned that community involvement is an engagement process between communities and tourism planning that will improve quality of life, indirectly meeting the needs and aspirations of the community and as a result it will educate and empower the community. Hence, this tourism programme requires proper planning. Proper planning process is

essential as ignoring it will lead to conflict and chaos among stall the parties involved either directly or otherwise (Emily 2009; MillarandAiken1995). This situation will happen when the tourism planning does not match the needs of the community (Timothy, 1999). In addition, the community does not have power to influence the decisions relating to activities of tourism development (Scheyvens, 2000).

According to Timothy (1999), the involvement of local people in tourism activities can be explained from two aspects which are local involvement in decision making process and the involvement of local residents in profits or benefits resulting from tourism activities. Participation generally refers to empowering local community to determine their own goals for development, and consulting with locals to determine their hopes and concerns for tourism. Akama (1996) also explained that local residents not only act as are source for tourism, but they are important assets to make tourism activity to be more robust and more effective. Therefore, local people should be involved in providing ideas on the development of tourism or decide on the programs that are appropriate to their environment.

Past studies either local or international have proven that involvement plays a crucial role in the success of agro-tourism programmes, nonetheless can similar cases be found in the context of agro-tourism programmes in *Desa Wawasan Nelayan*? Hence, this study attempts to provide the answer on the involvement of fishermen communities on agro-tourism activities.

2. Methodology

This study employed a survey research methodology where data was gathered through the use of questionnaires. The data were collected from two *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* villages namely *Desa Wawasan NelayanRhu10*, located in Terengganu and *Desa Wawasan NelayanSempang Pantai*, located in Malacca. The selection of these sites was based on a list obtained from the LKIM of fishermen villages that had won the *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* competition at the national level. To get the minimum number of sample for each analysis, it was determined by G Power software. It is the probability that the test to be conducted will detect statistically significant differences when differences exist. Using the table of random numbers, total of 220 respondents from the two villages were randomly selected as respondents.

The questionnaire used a 5 point Likert Scales with 1 representing strongly disagree, 2 representing disagree, 3 representing somewhat disagree, 4 representing agree and 5 representing strongly agree, except on demographic part which required respondents to choose one answer that appropriately describes them. Each respondent was assisted by enumerators to answer the questionnaires and took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. SPSS Statistics software was used to run the suitable and appropriate analysis such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and independent t-test.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents. It can be observed that the gender distribution was 50.5% for male and 49.5% for female. Almost all of the respondents were Malay (99.1%) followed by Chinese (.9%). Almost half of the respondents (40.5%) aged between 41 – 60 years old and 37.3% of them aged between 21 to 40 years old while the remaining 0.5% of the respondents aged more than 81 years old. With regards to education level, most of them possessed SPM/SPMV/MCE (39.1%) and only 4.1% of them had a higher level of education based on the fact that only 4.1 % of them possessed Bachelor/Master/PhD and 1.8% possessed STPM/Diploma.

Table 1. Demographic profile (n=220)

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
State				
Terengganu (Rhu 10)	110	50.0		
Malacca (Sempang Pantai)	110	50.0		
Gender				
Male	111	50.5		
Female	109	49.5		
Race				
Malay (Muslim)	218	99.1		
Chinese (Buddha)	2	.9		
Age			43.98	16.02

< 20 years	15	6.8
21 – 40 years	82	37.2
41 – 60 years	89	40.5
61 – 80 years	33	15.0
>81 years	1	.5
Education Level		
Non-Formal Educational	15	6.8
Primary School	67	30.5
PMR/SRP/LCE	29	13.2
SPM/SPMV/MCE	86	39.1
Certificate Skill	10	4.5
STPM/Diploma	4	1.8
Bachelor/Master/PhD	9	4.1

Table 2 shows the mean scores for each statement used to measure community involvement on agro-tourism activity in Rhu 10 and Sempang Pantai. Based on mean scores presented, both in Rhu 10 and Sempang Pantai were identified to have the highest mean score ($M=4.32$ and $M=4.54$) on the statement “I am concerned about the cleanliness of the village”. Meanwhile, the respondents in Rhu 10 and Sempang Pantai were identified to record the lowest mean score ($M=1.55$ and $M=1.75$) on the statement “I am involved in tourism activities here”.

Table 2. Community involvement in agro-tourism activity

Bil.	Statement	Rhu 10 (Mean)	Sempang Pantai (Mean)
Overall mean score		2.76	2.97
1.	I involve in fishing activities in this area	2.33	1.97
2.	I involve in tourism activities here	1.55	1.75
3.	I involve in agricultural activities other than fishing in this area	1.84	2.00
4.	I am often involved in meetings related to the development of agro-tourism activities in this area	2.24	2.67
5.	I work with relevant agencies in strengthening tourism activity here	2.52	3.03
6.	My involvement in tourism activities are not influenced by anyone, it is my own desire	2.95	3.26
7.	I often promote local products to tourists	3.08	3.52
8.	I involve in entrepreneurial activities in this area(local products, business)	2.73	2.74
9.	I involve in environmental conservation activities in this area(e.g. clean the beach)	4.05	4.18
10.	I am concerned about the cleanliness of the village	4.32	4.54

The overall mean score for level of involvement in Rhu 10 is 2.76 with S.D .772 and Sempang Pantai ($M=2.97$) with S.D (.785) as presented in Table 3. To gain the overall mean score the cumulative mean score of ten statements used was calculated. Then, the resulted mean score was divided into three levels namely low (1.00-2.33), moderate (2.34-3.67) and high (3.68-5.00). Both villages of Rhu 10 and Sempang Pantai have a similar percentage in the moderate level (56.4% and 51.8%), followed by low level (30.9% and 24.5%) and the lowest percentage is the high level (12.7% and 23.6%). The overall mean score depicted that the respondents in Rhu 10 and Sempang Pantai have a moderate level of involvement in agro-tourism activities. It indicates that most of community *Desa Wawasan Nelayanin* Rhu 10 and Sempang Pantai are still at the moderate level toward involvement on agro-tourism activities. Based on an analysis using independent t-test (table 4) shows the comparison of involvement between the means of Rhu 10 and Sempang Pantai. This difference was not significant $t = -1.956, p = .052$ which is greater than .05.

Table 3. Level of involvement on agro-tourism activity in Rhu 10 and Sempang Pantai

	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
Rhu 10 (n=110)			2.76	.772
Low (1.00-2.33)	34	30.9		
Moderate (2.34-3.67)	62	56.4		
High (3.68-5.00)	14	12.7		
Sempang Pantai (n=110)			2.97	.785
Low (1.00-2.33)	27	24.5		
Moderate (2.34-3.67)	57	51.8		
High (3.68-5.00)	26	23.6		

Table 4. Differences of involvement on agro-tourism activity in Rhu 10 and Sempang Pantai using independent t-test

	n	Mean	S.D	T	p
Involvement				-1.956	.052
Rhu 10	110	2.76	.772		
Sempang Pantai	110	2.97	.785		

4. Discussion

Based on the results of this survey, the respondents from both states have a moderate involvement in agro-tourism activities, and there was no significant difference between the means of these two villages. Agro-tourism programmes should be one of the tools that can significantly have an impact on the involvement of rural communities. However, the finding of this study showed that agro-tourism is not well integrated into the rural development strategies to contribute to the betterment of the fishermen communities. This can be seen in the items pertaining to their involvement in meetings related to the development of agro-tourism activities, engagement in working with relevant agencies in strengthening tourism activity and participation in entrepreneurial activities related to agro-tourism is still low. It might have occurred because of certain factors, one of which may be due to local communities are only supposed to hold positions in the association related to agro-tourism program, but actually these tourism development projects are monopolized by outsiders (Kalsom and Nor, 2006). Consequently, the benefits of the agro-tourism activities are not adequately available to the local communities particularly those involving business and employment opportunities. In addition, community involvement in tourism programmes is still moderate probably due to the rural community structure such as a weak relationship and cooperation between village committee members and individuals in the community (Zainal, 2007).

For the involvement in environmental conservation, both villages agree on the statements regarding their concern about the cleanliness of the villages. Data gained here is in line with Sijlbing (2010) which stated that when the area has become tourism destination, indirectly, it raises environment awareness among authorities and the community. Consequently, they will protect and conserve the environment more actively than before so that the area remains beautiful and able to attract tourists. To do this is crucial as the success of the tourism industry depends entirely on local culture and natural resources; it requires the involvement of local people to operate them (Lillywhite and Lillywhite, 1991).

5. Conclusion

Desa Wawasan Nelayan agro-tourism is one of the new products for tourist attractions in Malaysia under the program organized by LKIM. The purpose of this program is to promote the beauty of fishermen villages and indirectly as a tool that can significantly impact on fishermen community such as increasing the income of fishermen and empower the communities. The study had identified that the involvement of the fishermen communities in *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* seem to be at a moderate level. Even though the local participation in agro-tourism of *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* program is moderate, but most of the community of *Desa Wawasan Nelayan* are concerned on the cleanliness of the village. The study recommends that more efforts should be taken by local community to involve in the development of agro-tourism programs that bring the needs and aspirations of the community and as a result will educate, empower and support the cohesion of the community.

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