

Local Community Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of the Lenggong Valley

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship has been acknowledged as the best approach to empower the socio-economic development of rural communities in various countries. Lenggong Valley is in its first phase of tourism development and entrepreneurship of local community is still under studied in Lenggong. By looking at various business activities that could be generated by the development, their involvement in business would contribute to a better economic return. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the entrepreneurship of local community in Lenggong Valley. Based on quantitative face to face survey conducted on 500 residents in Lenggong Valley, the finding indicates that some of the local communities in Lenggong are already involved in entrepreneurship activities; however their business survivability should be a concern as they face limited financial sources and support. Furthermore, the majority of them are still involve in agricultural related activities making an indication that major effort is required to transform their life-style from agriculture to entrepreneurship. The finding provides a suggestion to the government on the needs to implement various entrepreneurship related programme in Lenggong Valley. Strategies to increase their involvement could be done through innovative programs, awareness, preparedness, and education on future entrepreneurs. Having newly declared as a world heritage site, this paper demonstrates the preliminary result on the need for a deeper examination on local community entrepreneurship in Lenggong Valley.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, community participation, Lenggong Valley and tourism development

1. Introduction

Tourism is an industry with the potential to develop rural entrepreneurship. Sherief (2005) argued that poverty is predominantly rural, and affirms that rural development is increasingly being linked to entrepreneurship (Petrin, 1994). Entrepreneurship is crucial to economic growth. For rural areas, the benefits of entrepreneurship are undeniable. Entrepreneurship establishes the qualities of human capital to be highly skilled, resilient, and competitive, as well as innovative and creative in business (Vinten & Alcock, 2004; Thurik & Wennekers, 2004).

Striving for developed nation status in 2020, Malaysia has identified human capital as the most important resource and has ensured successful transformation toward becoming a high-income country. The New Economic Model (NEM) launched in 2010 emphasizes the growth of micro-scale businesses and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and enhances the entrepreneurial ecosystem and chains. In the 6th Malaysia Plan (1992), the government introduced the concept of community development entrepreneurs through the "One Village, One Product" program, which was later known as "One District, One Industry." The objective of this program is to attract tourists to rural areas, as well as to generate income by involving villagers in the entrepreneur community development program. Based on the example of Japan, this program develops SMEs within villages by using local resources to manufacture handicrafts, food, and agricultural goods.

Lenggong is a popular cultural heritage attraction (Saidin, 2010). The attraction is situated in the Lenggong subdistrict, Hulu Perak District, Perak, Peninsular Malaysia, which is about 100 km from the capital, Ipoh. Lenggong valley is located between two mountain ranges, the Titiwangsa and Bintang, which make it suitable for agriculture and animal husbandry. Composed of a few villages, Lenggong is now prominent after being

acknowledged as a World Heritage site. According to geologists, Lenggong is one of the earliest inhabited places in Malaysia, that is, about 1.83 million years ago (Saidin, Abdullah, Nordin, & Saad, 2011). Moreover, geological studies on Bukit Bunuh, Lenggong indicated a meteorite hit this area about 1.83 million years ago (Ministry of Information, Communication, and Culture, 2011). This recognition provides an additional attraction value to Lenggong. Besides local tourist, the arrival of international visitors boosts tourism development in this area. The state government is currently taking initiatives to position Lenggong as one of the world's attractions, and for local community to participate in its development. Archeological tourism attractions will definitely spur other business activities in Lenggong. As a new tourism destination, Lenggong is locally and internationally developing its brand. Traditionally, local communities in Lenggong valley are involved in first-level economic activities, which are agriculture and fisheries (Jaafar, Rashid, Maideen, & Mohamad, 2011). However, some residents have moved on to the third economic level, which is providing services or selling goods to other people.

Thus, entrepreneurship development is an interesting issue to discuss. In the tourism viewpoint, entrepreneurship research on archaeological sites remains a new area to explore. In Lenggong, the local community involvement in entrepreneurship activities is still at the beginning stage, while business involvement is still unknown. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate and discuss the Lenggong local community and its entrepreneurship. The findings will be discussed in view of the importance of the local community in supporting the future tourism development in Lenggong.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Rural Community Involvement

Communities can be defined as groups of individuals who work together to achieve economic development (Beck, 1992). Researchers use certain keywords to define a community, such as togetherness (Bartle, 2007) and kinship among members (Peterson, 1988). Social relations, mutual interests, and participation in common activities (Bartle, 2007) interconnect communities. A local community is defined as a group of individuals who live or work within the same geographical area, and share similar cultures or common interests. The local community is a basic element of rural tourism development (Aref, Gill, & Aref, 2010). Besides providing support to operate tourism businesses (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000), people in host communities can entertain tourists by sharing their culture in different places and social contexts.

Tourism is a way to spur rural economic development (Gurung & DeCoursey, 2000). Sharpley (2000) stresses that rural tourism catalyzes socio-economic development and regeneration. Rural tourism provides new sources of income for families living in a remote rural area (Gale, 2006), and offers an agricultural resource (Petric, 2003). Tourism is also important in rural development because it generates income and employment, constituting a market for local products and facilitating the diversification of traditional poor economies by revitalizing them (Ghaderi & Henderson, 2012). In accordance with this influence, Azman, Halim, Liu, and Komoo (2011) state that the best advantage of tourism development is that it increases the income, employment, and educational opportunities available to local communities. According to Hall (2004), rural tourism benefits local communities by providing supplementary income in the farming, craft, and service sectors; the opportunity to achieve the economic value of quality-based production of food products; and the opportunity to re-evaluate the heritage and its symbolism, environment, and identity. Thongma, Leelapattana, and Hung (2011) suggest that the involvement of local communities is instrumental to the success of rural tourism development because these communities build familiarity among tourists and impress visitors with their local cultural activities. In addition, visitors who are satisfied with their tourism experience decide to revisit the same destinations (Lo, Songan, Mohamad, & Yeo, 2013).

A few previous studies raise issues about local communities in rural tourism, while other studies argue about the significant contributions of tourism development to local communities (Hampton, 2005; Liu, 2006; Sundin, 2011). For example, Hampton (2005) stresses the significance of high involvement among local communities in ensuring the successful development of the Indonesian tourism industry. However, rural tourism development failed to specifically plan the development to benefit the local community. The local community claim that majority of travel plans to develop a region or destination has not sufficiently considered the willingness and ability of local human resources to participate. Therefore, local human resources are marginalized from tourism development because of their inability to get involved (Sundin, 2011). By contrast, the lack of coordination, intention, and integration of local capacity impedes successful local involvement in tourism (Liu, 2006).

2.2 Rural Community Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship provides benefits to the community so that individuals and organizations become accountable and responsible for their respective areas (Clamp & Alhamis, 2010; Bornstein, 1998; Dees, 1999; Giddens, 1997; Kim, 1996; Osborner & Flynn, 1997; Reis, 1999; Schuyler, 1998; Thalluber, 1998). In rural areas, entrepreneurship results from a unique combination of resources that are either inside or outside of the agricultural sector (Sherief, 2005). The economic goals of an entrepreneur and the social goals of rural development are strongly interrelated; thus, entrepreneurship in rural areas is usually community-based, has strong extended family linkages, and has a relatively significant effect on a rural community. Entrepreneurship is a key element in individual or human capital development, and helps address social issues (Vinten & Alcock, 2004; Thurik & Wennekers, 2004). Communities built with strong entrepreneurial foundation and environment can energize local entrepreneurs.

Vinten and Alcock (2004) considered research on rural entrepreneurship as relatively limited, and knowledge is necessary to foster the process. Local natural attractions in rural areas provide a potential tourism market for local entrepreneurial development. According to Stathopoulou, Psaltopoulos, and Skuras (2004), three major features of the physical environment significantly affect entrepreneurship: location, natural resources, and landscape. Depending on the uniqueness of each physical environment, each tourism destination can offer various attractions and provide potential opportunities to local people.

An entrepreneurial environment results from a combination of factors that play important roles in the development of new business ventures (Gnyawali & Fogel, 1994). It refers to the overall exogenous factors that influence the willingness of people to undertake entrepreneurial activities, and the availability of assistance and support services that facilitate start-ups. According to Covin and Slevin (1991), the external environment includes economic, political or legal, and socio-cultural forces that provide a broader context for the operations of an organization. For example, Shane (2003) acknowledged the effects of specific cultural systems and the collective values of individuals on the level of entrepreneurship. Gnyawali and Fogel (1994) stated that entrepreneurship in developing economies can thrive based on two conditions: first, potential entrepreneurs find opportunities in the environment, and second, environmental conditions motivate and enhance the ability of entrepreneurs to start and manage a new business. An encouraging local environment facilitates entrepreneurship and business growth. According to Shane (2003), the environment or context includes the physical, social, cultural, and economic infrastructures of the local community within which entrepreneurial ventures are initiated. This context is a critical factor in establishing new enterprises. Communities that are confident with development strategies can improve the entrepreneurial environment (Richards & Hall, 2000).

3. Methodology

This research is part of a larger study on community participation in Lenggong valley. A survey questionnaire was designed to focus on community participation in entrepreneurship. The specific part of questionnaire booklet consisted of 10 questions on the demographics, and 15 questions measured entrepreneurship participation. All questions were objective, and divided into four sections, namely, entrepreneurship involvement, business promotion, networking, and entrepreneurship knowledge.

This research conducted the quantitative method of data collection from April to May 2012. The stratified random sampling method was employed to distribute the questionnaire among the local community according to districts and villages. Lenggong is represented by three districts, namely, Lenggong, Temelong, and Durian Pipit, which have six, eight, and nine villages, respectively. Lenggong valley has 16,320 residents.

Cooper (2008) recommended a sample of 10% of the parent population. McQueen and Knussen (2002) emphasized the importance of having a large sample size to increase the possibilities of attaining statistical reliability. Using random sampling technique, the present study selected 500 local communities in Lenggong as respondents. Data collection was done by using a personal survey from the three districts of Lenggong valley.

4. Analysis

The results of analysis represented in Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the local community. Majority of the respondents are residents (90.6%) of Lenggong valley, whereas only 9.4% are not residents. Female respondents comprise 52.2%, and only 47.8% of the respondents are male. With regard to marital status, 59.4% of the respondents are married, 32.4% are single, and 8.2% are single parents. More than half of the respondents are Malays (59.4%), followed by the Chinese (24.4%), and the Indians (16.0%). Most of the respondents are between 46 to 55 years old (22.6%), followed by 26 to 35 years old (22%), and young respondents aged from 25 and below comprise 21.6%. In terms of educational background, few respondents (11.2%) obtain higher

education (college, institute, or university). Most of them finished higher level of education (56.0%), whereas 32.8% completed secondary school.

In terms of occupation, most respondents are self-employed (54.8%). Some respondents are employed in private companies (29.0%), while a few (16.2%) work in the government sector. Agriculture and food are the two prominent involvement sectors, with 38.0% and 30.8%, respectively, followed by business (20.0%). Regarding the work experience of the respondents, majority have worked less than 5 years (49.0%), followed by 6 to 10 years (22.8%), and 11 to 15 years (14.4%).

Table 1. Profile of respondents

Description	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
Residency	Yes	453	90.6
	No	47	9.4
Gender	Male	239	47.8
	Female	261	52.2
Marital Status	Married	297	59.4
	Not married	162	32.4
Race	Single Parent	41	8.2
	Malay	297	59.4
	Chinese	122	24.4
Age	Indian	80	16.0
	Other	1	0.2
	Less than 25	108	21.6
	26 to 35 years old	110	22.0
	36 to 45 years old	93	18.6
Education	46 to 55 years old	113	22.6
	More than 56 years old	76	15.2
	Primary school	164	32.8
	Secondary school	108	21.6
	Finished SPM	172	34.4
	Diploma	39	7.8
	Degree	15	3.0
Occupation	Master/PhD	2	0.4
	Government	81	16.2
	Private	145	29.0
	Self-employed	274	54.8
Sector involvement in entrepreneurship	Agriculture	190	38.0
	Fishing	20	4.0
	Business	100	20.0
	Food	154	30.8
	Others	36	7.2
Income	Less than RM 1000	261	52.2
	RM 1001-RM 2000	185	37.0
	RM 2001-RM 3000	40	8.0
	RM 3001 and above	14	2.8

Description	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage
Work experience	1 to 5 years	245	49.0
	6 to 10 years	114	22.8
	11 to 15 years	72	14.4
	16 to 20 years	24	4.8
	21 to 25 years	11	2.2
	26 to 30 years	24	4.8
	31 years and above	10	2.0

Table 2 shows the local community involvement in entrepreneurship. Majority of the respondents have experience being involved in small business (40.8%), whereas the rest have not. Regarding the period of their involvement, 40.2% have been involved for 6 years and above, followed by less than 1 year (31.4%) and 1 to 5 years (28.4%). Getting higher income is the benefit they gained in their involvement (43.1%), followed by satisfaction (35.3%), and others (21.6%).

Not having enough capital was rated as the main reason for leaving the business (38.2%), followed by other factors, such as age (22.5%), health (17.2%), poor management (14.7%), and others (11.2%). Regarding problems encountered during the running of the business, majority answered having not enough capital (38.7%), followed by no support (21.6%), failure to compete in the business (14.7%), and the absence of customers (14.2%).

In terms of networking, the respondents ranked the people with whom they deal most in doing business. The highest is their relatives (31.4%), followed by friends (23.5%), head of villages (17.6%), and government officers (10.8%). In their involvement in any association, majority was not involved in associations (62.78%). Then, 72.1% have not attended any training or workshop. Only 19.1% have attended workshops arranged by the government, whereas only 11.3% attended private workshops. No prominent workshop was specified by the respondents. Only two respondents (1.0%) attended fisheries workshop, three (13.7%) attended agricultural, and four (1.96%) attended food-related courses, whereas, other courses are related to sewing, craft, automotive, entrepreneurship, and business. However, 93.6% have not applied any of the aforementioned activities after the training.

With regard to having knowledge about financial facilities, the respondents who answered yes and no are close in number (50.5% and 49.5%, respectively). Regarding their knowledge of available financial facilities, majority chose Amanah Ikhtiar (22.5%), followed by TEKUN (17.6%), and MARA (5.9%). In terms of their action if they would be given an opportunity to start a business, majority said they would find a place (30.9%), others said they would find capital (29.4%), find business partners (13.2%), and find information (10.3%). In response to what or who can encourage local community involvement in entrepreneurship, the respondents chose attitude change (26.5%), followed by government effort (22.5%), opportunity (22.1%), and knowledge (19.6%).

Table 2. Local community involvement in entrepreneurship

	Frequency	Percentage
Involvement in small business		
Yes	204	40.8
No	296	59.2
Period of involvement in small business		
Less than 1 year	64	31.4
1 to 5 years	58	28.4
6 years and above	82	40.2
Benefit of involvement in entrepreneurship		
Satisfaction	72	35.3
Higher income	88	43.1
Others	44	21.6
Reason for stopping from being involved		
Not enough capital	78	38.2
Age	46	22.5

	Frequency	Percentage
Health	35	17.2
Poor management	30	14.7
Others	15	7.4
Problem encountered during running the business		
Not enough capital	79	38.7
No support	44	21.6
Failure to compete	30	14.7
No customer	29	14.2
Weather	8	3.9
Others	14	6.9
People with whom they deal in doing the business		
Relatives	64	31.4
Friends	48	23.5
Head of villages	36	17.6
Government officials	22	10.8
Political figures	10	4.9
All of the above	8	3.9
Others	16	7.8
Involvement in any association		
Yes	76	37.3
No	128	62.7
Attendance in training/workshop		
Yes	57	27.9
No	147	72.1
Organization of workshop		
Private	23	11.3
Government	39	19.1
Not applicable	142	69.6
Have knowledge on financial facilities		
Yes	103	50.5
No	101	49.5
Available financial facilities		
TEKUN	36	17.6
Amanah Ikhtiar	46	22.5
MARA	12	5.9
Others	17	8.3
Not applicable	93	45.6
Total		
Action if given opportunity to start a business		
Find place	63	30.9
Find capital	60	29.4
Find business partner	27	13.2
Find information	21	10.3
Find mentor	9	4.4
Others	11	5.4
All above	13	6.4
Means to encourage local community participation in entrepreneurship		
Attitude change	54	26.5
Government effort	46	22.5
Find opportunity	45	22.1
Find knowledge	40	19.6
Others	5	2.5
All of the above	14	6.9

5. Discussion

This paper has explored the conditions of entrepreneurship in a local community in the archaeological site of Lenggong valley, peninsular Malaysia. The recognition of Lenggong as a UNESCO World Archaeological Heritage site boosts its tourism development. Similarly, the local community has been exposed to various business opportunities that enabled them to launch entrepreneurship ventures. Majority of the residents of Lenggong valley are Malays. The area has yet to be exposed to the kind of development in which tourism can attract outsiders to venture into business or provide work opportunities.

The survey respondents are mostly married, have varied age ranges, and only a few obtained higher education. Most of the respondents are self-employed and some work in the private sector. The most popular ventures are in the agricultural, food, and business sectors. The monthly income of respondents is below RM 2,000. Local community involvement focuses on the agricultural and fisheries sector, whereas the business set-up relates closely to the availability of local resources. Accordingly, an equal entrepreneurship involvement was found on the basis of gender and race. However, married respondents aged 26 years and above are more actively involved in entrepreneurship compared with other age groups.

Similar to the common practice of entrepreneurship in the local community, most of the respondents have not been involved in entrepreneurial activities, and less than half the number of respondents can sustain their business for more than six years. Majority of them are involved to earn extra income and satisfaction. However, the most common reason for business discontinuity is the problem with capital and personal limitation caused by age and health. The respondents indicated that they could be discouraged because of limited capital, difficulties in obtaining support, and failure to compete in their respective markets.

The local individuals received significant support from their relatives, aside from friends and village leaders. These individuals still have narrow perceptions on the importance of networking and linkages by joining associations or attending trainings or courses (Ateljevic, 2009). The government also plays a major role in developing local entrepreneurship. However, it has not exerted sufficient effort to train the local community (Ateljevic, 2009). The local community mentioned its involvement in various workshops even without focusing on specific targets or achievements. The aim of the government through the program "One Village, One Industry" is not effectively conducted in Lenggong.

Moreover, half of the respondents have no knowledge of financial facilities, and the most popular financial association they know are Amanah Ikhtiar and TEKUN. Amanah Ikhtiar is a private trust established to assist less fortunate groups and reduce poverty in Malaysia by financing activities to increase the income of poor communities in rural areas. TEKUN, an agency under the Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperative Development, was established in 1998 to provide fast and easy financing for locals to start and develop their own businesses. These two bodies are popular among rural people who want to obtain an allocation for their businesses. The local community should be provided with specific locations, financial facilities, knowledge, and guidance to enable them to start businesses. The respondents expressed their hope for the government to help transform the local economy into one that is characterized by entrepreneurship and business. Providing knowledge and opportunity is a major step to involve the local community in entrepreneurship. Currently, the government exerts effort in arranging related and useful courses at a minimum level. The respondents only rely on their own resources and limited assistance is provided by communities. Lack of community support would discourage local community involvement in entrepreneurship (Richards & Hall, 2000). The results are in accordance with the literature that presents constraints for entrepreneurs in the tourism section such as lack of expertise in business, lack of access to financial resources, and managerial flaws (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Irvine & Anderson, 2004; Ateljevic, 2009).

The preceding discussion highlights the important role of exogenous factors, particularly the local government, in facilitating and encouraging entrepreneurship (Covin & Slevin, 1991). Slow progress in entrepreneurship can be traced to the passive actions of the accountable parties who are supposed to encourage entrepreneurship. The real opportunities have not been explored. Local residents might have difficulty escaping from their traditional culture and norm to start their entrepreneurial venture, as argued by Morrison (1998) and Shane, Locke, and Collins (2003). With minimal internal drive and weak motivation among the locals, outsiders might grab the opportunities instead. Such a case would illustrate the failure of the local community to benefit from tourism development, as emphasized by Sundin (2011) and Liu (2006).

6. Conclusion

Majority of the population in the Lenggong Valley, a new developing rural area, have only secondary formal education and are still dependent on the first level of economic income. Among the residents, 40% have set up small businesses. With a monthly income below RM 2,000, most of them intend to become entrepreneurs to gain additional income from their small businesses. Limitations such as personal discouragement and lack of capital resulting from lack of support have caused them to leave the industry. These residents were heavily dependent on relatives and friends and were weakly involved in networking and training. In addition, these residents have limited knowledge in finding external capital and rely mainly on facilities provided by Amanah Ikhtiar and TEKUN.

The above result highlighted that the local community involvement in entrepreneurship activities has been very minimal in Lenggong valley, thus requiring strong support and guidance. To look forward to an active participation of government in encouraging entrepreneurship is important. Toward the achievement of the NEM, the Malaysian government should continuously support entrepreneurship development. In general, the government has taken various steps to promote the development of entrepreneurship including providing convenient economic environments, various financing resources, and funding schemes to spur the entrepreneurship development of the local community. Future successful entrepreneurship developments require the active participation of multiple sectors of the community, including government, business, finance, education, and social support.

Considering the significant development in Lenggong Valley, the government needs to focus on developing and empowering the existing entrepreneurship program with specific targets of achievement. With a limited number of respondents who attended trainings, few established business, and less knowledge on financial facilities, more information should be provided to the local community. The poor follow-up activities hamper the success of entrepreneurship programs. Fundamental changes on future economic activity in Lenggong valley would require policymakers to take a fresh look at the local community involvement and development. Many community development strategies used in the past would not simply produce the desired economic results when applied in Lenggong Valley. Another challenge is to strengthen the entrepreneurial culture in the local community through various strategies, such as innovative programs, awareness, preparedness, and education on entrepreneurial practices. The importance of the environment needs special consideration on sustainability issues. Having the agricultural sector involved in the main supporting activities, the development should not jeopardize the main economic activity. However, having development guidelines would help ensure that the development will be conducted with a minimal effect to the natural environment and the advantages of local community will be cared for.

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