MARAGANG HILL TREKKING THROUGH COMMUNITY-BASED ECOTOURISM (CBE): THE TOURIST GUIDES RESPONSIBILITY AND CHALLENGES IN KUNDASANG, SABAH, MALAYSIA

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Abstract

The issue of this article is tourist guides' responsibility and the challenges they face when conducting Maragang Hill trekking activities through community-based ecotourism (CBE) in Kundasang, Sabah. This study used mixed data collection methods: in-depth interviews with eight informants and observations around Mesilou village and at Maragang hill. The survey was also conducted on 63 community members in Maragang Hill as a supporting method to obtain more accurate data. Secondary sources refer to reinforce the study data. The concepts used in this study are interrelated to the topic and to understand the issue deeply. The results of this study have shown that although tourist guides did their responsibility perfectly (such as providing additional information to the tourists, a safety briefing, giving information about flora and fauna to the tourists, and hiking rules), some of the challenges remain for them. This study indicates the challenges tourist guides face while conducting Maragang Hill trekking activities through community-based ecotourism. This study enhances the concept of CBE in studies related to ecotourism activities, especially ecotourism based on nature. In so doing, the result of this study reduces the challenges faced by tourist guides or CBE management while conducting Maragang Hill-related activities soon.

Keywords: Community Based Ecotourism, Tourist Guides, Responsibility, Challenges, Local Community

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INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the sub-tourism sector is under the service, which is seen to contribute the third largest to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) after the manufacturing and construction sectors (Norlida, 2011). Both tourism and Ecotourism provided 2 million jobs in 2010 (Norlida, 2011). According to Sabah Tourism Board (STB) statistics from January to December 2019, Sabah recorded 4,195,903 total tourists, with an estimated receipt of RM9.0 billion. Malaysia's tourism industry, especially in Sabah, is gaining popularity and high profits. It brings benefits to the country due to the influx of foreign tourists. This has made the tourism sector one of the country's main sectors in future development. However, although tourism brought development, it also brought impact through the overuse and exploitation of tourism destinations (Normah et al., 2021). For example, Kinabalu Park (Normah et al., 2020) had an adverse impact as the number of tourists increased.

In recent years, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has opened up a new tourism industry (Buhalis & Amaranggana, 2014). According to Syakir Amir et al., 2020, the physical characteristics of a place may attract tourists. However, services and technology offerings also substantially impact tourists' psychological perception of a destination. Therefore, ICT plays an essential key role in shaping the future of tourism. Nevertheless, in this paper, Community Based Ecotourism is seen as having a much more critical role in tourism, especially in developing countries and states that still preserve more of nature which is Sabah itself. Community-Based Ecotourism is expanded and defined as Ecotourism, where the local community has significant control and deep involvement in development and management. Most of the benefits remain in the community (Declaration of Quebec, 2002). Ecotourism in Malaysia today is closely related to sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism means natural resources, including Ecotourism, culture, and others, that are preserved for continued use in the future without affecting the opportunities of the present society to benefit from them (Mohamdisa Hashim & Mohamad Suhaily, 2010). Organizing operational institutions concerning Ecotourism developed by the community is vital as the community shares the benefits gained through village development and conservation. The government's role is to ensure that the proposal runs smoothly by making arrangements between community members and the private sector and providing training related to the ecotourism business (Amat Ramsa & Abdullah Mohd, 2004). According to a study by Amal Najihah et al. (2018), most local communities and stakeholders in Malaysia need to understand the potential of sustainable Ecotourism that can benefit them now and in the future. This happens because of the need for more awareness among them about land use that impacts nature. More assessment of Ecotourism's potential and the community's lack of motivation to develop the area towards upgraded

facilities, transport, and infrastructure development is needed. Velan et al. (2022) found that the basic idea about the concept of social transformation is limited in exposure. Such concepts are not widely used in their daily lives, even though the government uses the term' social transformation' in almost all its development policies. This issue had significant relationships as the social transformation concept in CBE represents the community livelihood benefits through their active participation in CBE ventures.

In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the 12th goal, to Ensure Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns, has been targeted by 2030 to formulate and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products. The importance of emphasizing SDG target 12. b, as a tool to monitor the impact of sustainable development for sustainable tourism. This statement is vowed by the United Nations (UNWTO) on the World Tourism Organization website, where tourism for the SDGs can help achieve each of the 17 UN sustainable development goals. For example, the first goal will help create jobs at the local level and further generate income to reduce poverty and create the necessary investment for entrepreneurial activities in the community.

As the tourism sector develops, it needs excellent and quality tourist guides, which are essential key players in tourism products and experiences. Cohen (1985) touched on the role of the tour guide and argued that the tour guide plays a significant role in the experience of visitors, potentially making or breaking the tour and the experience. The role of the tour guide is to ensure the tour runs smoothly and is safe guiding. Tour guiding takes place in every geographic region of every country (Zillinger et al., 2012). Guiding is one of the world's oldest professions, with early historical accounts referring to pathfinders and cicerone, antecedents of the contemporary guide (Pond, 1993). Regnier et al. (1994), nature guides like Enos Mills (1920) were leading visitors through the North American wilderness and laying the foundations for the profession of interpretation. As tourism becomes more globalized, contemporary guided tours have developed into diverse, multifaceted, context-specific, and adaptable products, offering benefits beyond safety and convenience (Betty & Rosemary, 2015).

A sociological perspective framework by Cohen (1985) presents the various roles and functions of the tour guide as a basis for comparative studies of guiding in a range of environments. He also labels the leadership and mediatory spheres of guiding as outer and inner-directed aspects, which are tasks outside the tour group and tasks directed within the group. Meanwhile, Weiler and Davis (1993) develop a framework depicting the roles of the nature-based/ ecotour leader/ guide. It has three spheres tour management, experience management, and resource management. The responsibility of tourist guides in developing

countries is a means of livelihood that help to reduce poverty (Shephard & Royston, 2000).

This study aims to determine (a) the tourist guides' responsibility through CBE and (b) the challenges faced by tourist guides in Kundasang, Sabah. The findings of this paper also highlight the guide's responsibility and challenges through hill trekking activities for future ecotourism development. To conclude, community-based Ecotourism in Sabah is also growing along with the developments in Peninsular Malaysia. Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE) activities can help community members improve their standard of living. However, the trends guiding the future kept changing according to the macro and micro levels. Such as changes in the market and visitors' preferences, increased urbanization, social and economic changes, and political disruptions. All these will affect the potential implications for tour guiding practice. This paper describes the research background, methodology, literature review, results, and discussion in relation to the article's topic.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Kundasang is one of the tourist spots in Ranau. It is a popular place to produce agricultural products due to its hilly terrain and heavy tropical rains that are fertile for agricultural activities. Kundasang locates in the Crocker Range area, with a height of around 4000 to 6000 feet (Ramzah & Amriah, 2008). It is also rich in biodiversity because Mount Kinabalu, the highest in Southeast Asia, is located at Kinabalu Park, not far from the urban centre of Kundasang. As a result, many species and exotic plants exist, such as large pitchers and unique Rafflesia flowers. Tourism was the second most important source of income for the community of Kundasang due to its position between the west coast and east coast regions of Sabah. According to Ramzah & Amriah (2008), Kundasang is considered a strategic location. Some tourist activities around Kundasang are the rabbit farm, Mesilou Cats Village, Desa Dairy Farm and Alpaca Club. Other than that, there were hiking activities, such as Maragang Hill, Mesilou 3 Sixty Peak and Swine Hill. This article will focus on Kampung Mesilou and, specifically, Maragang Hill. Mesilou is located in the highest part and is known as Malaysia's highest and most excellent village (Raihan, Rosazman & Afrizal, 2018). In addition, Mesilou is also known for the settlement of the Dusun community, which has become the primary identity of the village (Raihan, Rosazman & Badariah, 2019). Ecotourism that has dramatically improved Mesilou Village is Maragang Hill and led Mesilou to gain a name in tourism. Other products, such as homestays, were built like mushrooms growing after rain because Maragang Hill received many foreigners who wanted to hike. This ecotourism activity helps the Mesilou community in many aspects of life. Maragang Hill chooses because the researcher wanted to see the challenges faced by tourist guides in ecotourism

activities in hilly areas. Maragang Hill is a particular spot as it opened after the earthquake experienced in 2015. That natural disaster was eye-opening to the community about the importance of diversifying tourism activities as it will affect the source of their income.

Table 1: Arrival Statistics of Maragang Hill Climbers, 2017-2022

No	Year	Total of Climbers
1	2017	1427
2	2018	12695
3	2019	15105
4	2020	6835
5	2021	5417
6	2022	7540

Source: Maragang Hill Manager, 2022

After the earthquake damaged the hill's path, the community surveyed the area, and the first platform was built in 2017 until Maragang Hill opened its door to the public on 16 September 2017. Maragang Hill is the result outcome and idea from the village community. The successful opening of Maragang Hill has also helped restore the villagers' economy, homestay operators, and stalls around Mesilou Village. From the previous studies, Maragang Hill was the fourth phase of tourism product in the tourism recovery program. A study by Raihan et al. (2019) has further supported the interview data conducted by the researcher in 2021 and 2022. Therefore, the local community's awareness is crucial about the need for other products commercialisation for tourists is a must in the ecotourism-based community (CBE).

LITERATURE REVIEW
(i) The main Concepts Definition.
Community-Based Ecotourism (CBE)
CBE has been termed with various meanings until Fennell (2001) managed to analyze that CBE terms have keywords such as conservation, education, ethics, sustainability, impact, and community benefits are suitable variables to represent the latest studies. Community-Based Ecotourism means different things to different people. The International Ecotourism Society defines it as "Travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people". While Boo (1992), rephrased it as 'nature tourism that promotes conservation and sustainable development, introducing the element of pro-active conservation and economic development.

Tour Guide
Professional Tour Guide Association of San Antonio (1997) defines a tour guide as someone who has a combination of adequate enthusiasm, knowledge, quality personality, and a high standard of conduct and ethic when leading groups of tourists to a tourist area while making interpretations and comments to the area. Robotic (2010), pointed out that Cohen (1985), was a pioneer in making tourist guides a scientific research subject and gave the origin and evolution of the role of the tourist guide Cohen (1985), has identified that tourist guides carry out four main functions, which are instrumental, social, interaction, and communicative he also identified four types of guides which are Original Guide, Animator, Tourist Leader, and Professional.

(ii) Theoretical Perspectives
Sustainable Ecotourism Development
Brundtland's report (1987), more accurate and general, sustainable development meets the needs of the present generation without hindering the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable tourism is formed through economic development, environmental preservation, and social development or socio-cultural development. The three concepts are interrelated to ensure economic, environmental, and social balance on internal and external levels (Meyer & Milewski, 2009). The International Ecotourism has defined ecotourism as tourism that preserves the environment and maintains the welfare of the local population. Ecotourism is seen to have a specific principle which is to contribute to the conservation of nature and cultural heritage actively. Ecotourism is also important in education because it can teach to respect nature and local culture and as a self-reflection for different tourists. Local residents can benefit from generating income through ecotourism (Sambotin, Patrascoiu, Coroian, Merce, 2011).

Social Capital
Social capital theory emerges from the thought that members of society are unlikely to be able to overcome the various problems faced individually. There is a need for good togetherness and cooperation from all levels of society to overcome the problem. In addition, social capital also refers to the relationship between individuals, social networks, and reciprocity norms and the sense of trust that arises from them (Teuku Afrizal, 2016). Robert Putnam in his book "Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy", in 1993 succeeded in popularizing the concept of social capital. Putnam considers social capital as a horizontal relationship between people. That is, social capital consists of a network of social attachments that are regulated by the norms that determine the productivity of society. Social Capital theory is seen to be used in community

involvement where Burkey, (1993), stated that involvement is seen as a process when all decision initiatives and resources management will be shared jointly, and the involvement provides benefits to those involved.

(iii) Reviews of Previous Research

Velan Kunjuram and Roslizawati (2014), in their study "Community Based Ecotourism (CBE) Development in Lower Kinabatangan of Sabah, Malaysian Borneo", was conducted with the aim of witnessing local participation in ecotourism activities. From this study, the concept of ecotourism is operated as alternative tourism that relies heavily on nature-based activities and the involvement of the local community is very important so that it can survive in the future and gain success. The method that has been used is qualitative which is in-depth interviews with communities involved in ecotourism activities. The purposive sampling technique is also used because respondents have experience managing ecotourism activities in Abai Village. As a result of this study, local communities are seen managing ecotourism activities such as Forest Habitat Restoration Projects and Homestay activities. Although local communities support ecotourism activities in Abai Village, they also face challenges such as lack of capital resources, lack of public facilities, and communication problems. This had caused development to become uncertain in that area. Mohamad Ridhwan and Salamiah Jamal (2021), "Hiking Tourism in Malaysia: Origin, benefits and Post COVID-19 Transformations" review the basics of hiking tourism, its development, and its significant contribution to the development of relevant publications. A semi-systematic study was conducted to obtain data. The results of this study have been divided into 6 aspects, namely the definition of climbing, adventure tourism trends, the progress of adventure tourism in Malaysia, the relationship with climbers and the benefits of climbing as well as the future of adventure tourism after COVID-19. This study stated that travel tourism has a positive impact on people psychologically. Cevat Tosun and Dallen Timothy (2003), in the article "Arguments for Community Participation in the Tourism Development Process," display normative capital about the discussion of tourism development involvement. Normative capital is based on 7 recommendations such as the relationship between tourism development involvement, the implementation of tourism plans, and achieving sustainable tourism development. This study wants to develop some recommendations as a framework to understand the involvement of tourism development and it finally focuses on a set of discussions which id to look at the roots of the involvement of tourism development. All the studies above show that community-based ecotourism can be viewed in different aspects of life and the environment. The first study showed that the challenges faced by the community cause the development to fail in an ecotourism area where it should have been a successful

development. The second study has proven that hiking tourism brings benefits, especially in psychological states. Meanwhile, an article by Tosun and Timothy shows that not all the recommendations stated are valid for use in all viewpoints and tourist places. Some of the discussions expressed are irrelevant and suitable for studying tourism development in different places.

METHODOLOGY
This research used a mixed methods approach. Cresswell (2008), mixed design study combines quantitative and qualitative data to have a better understanding and explaining the research problem. In addition, Kamarudin et al. (2014), stated that the combined method of two will provide several advantages such as being able to compare quantitative and qualitative data to understand the conflict between the results of the two research methods. The dominant approach of this study is the qualitative approach because Creswell & Poth (2018), mention that qualitative research is conducted when there are problems or issues that need to be explored. This exploration is necessary because it has the need to study groups or populations, identifying variables that cannot be easily measured. Other than that, qualitative is mainly used because the researcher needs a complex and detailed understanding of the issue. Krejcie & Morgan (1970), quantitative research is referred to a study that uses statistics involving a large number of respondents with at least more than 10 samples in measuring the variables of research. The quantitative approach in this study is used as supporting data towards qualitative data. It is supporting data as it did not analyze using ANOVA, regression, and correlation but only tested at the descriptive statistics level. This technique was measured using a 5-point Likert scale to view the respondent's data and to measure the challenges faced by a community member in community-based ecotourism activities. Human behavior and emotions, environmental characteristics, and situations are difficult to understand comprehensively by using only one method. Therefore, the mixed methods approach is the most appropriate way to gain an understanding of this study. The main purpose of using mixed methods is to produce strong qualitative and quantitative research to understand the phenomenon of the study and to strengthen support for the issues that arise. The purposive sampling method is used in this study to obtain research data and related information. Sample selection needs to be done well in order to obtain relevant data. Purposive sampling is used when a difficult-to-reach population needs to be measured and is the key to allowing the respondents to provide ample and justifiable feedback (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). There are 4 data collection methods used in this study including in-depth interview, observation, secondary data, and survey through questionnaire form. Interviews are considered social interactions based on conversation (Warren & Xavia, 2015). Small scale informants which are 8 informants and those who had positions

related to the study location were chosen to be interviewed. Moleong (1989), observation allows the researcher to see and feel the variety of social events and symptoms in it and will form knowledge together between the researcher and the subject. Notes taking and video recordings from the camera are used to help record the observation. All these will be compiled for data management purposes. Other than that, secondary data are used in the study to support information from primary sources which is data that had been collected directly from the field. A survey that is used as a quantitative method is modified following Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table, where the number of members involved to answer the questionnaire is only 63 respondents although there is a total of 75 people in the organization of Maragang Hill. The qualitative data analysis that is used in this study is thematic analysis. This analysis is highly inductive, themes emerge from the data and not from the researcher (Dawson, 2009). There are 5 fractions to discuss thematic analysis according to Creswell & Poth (2018). While quantitative data analysis is from a survey using descriptive statistical data to describe the characteristics of the sample. The questionnaire will be analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) program.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Tourist Guides Responsibility
The responsibility of tourist guides shown in this study was the same as the general responsibility of all guides worldwide. But there were some unique roles played by the tourist guides of Maragang Hill, Kundasang, Sabah. This study indicated that there were four responsibilities of the tourist guides such are provide additional information, safety briefing, giving information about flora and fauna, and hiking rules. Tourist guides in Maragang had to carry out various responsibilities to ensure that the CBE activity, hiking, brought a positive outcome to members and the community of Kampung Mesilou itself.

The first responsibility was to provide additional information to the tourists. Guides will give the history of Maragang Hill and Kampung Mesilou as this will help promote Mesilou to tourists who come to hike. Guide also gave information about the other CBE activities that are available such as visiting Aquafarm dan hiking to Mesilou 3Sixty Peak just opened this year. All these activities gave choices for tourists to try while in Mesilou. The variety of activities will then attract more visitors and further bring profit to the tourism sector in the area. The CBE in Mesilou and Maragang Hill organisation will benefit and advance together. As informant 11 stated about this:

> *"I think if someone asks about Mesilou 3 Sixty Peak, we will recommend that there is one long trail in the village,*

Maragang Hill. So, he has to have an understanding and support each other" Informant 11, 2022.

The second is a safety briefing, which needed to give at the beginning of the hike. Every hike that took place needed o start with a briefing, and this often appears in the interviews that the researcher did with the guides. Informant 6 stated that:

"Okay, the first guide is a guide who takes these tourists up Maragang Hill. From there, before hiking, he will give a safety briefing, what is allowed and what is not allowed during the hike; he will to monitor every move of the tourists." Informant 6, 2022.

Maragang Hill and its guides always took briefing and safety as the most important while hiking. This is to minimize accidents and injuries from happening. Guide's task becomes heavy when human life is involved. This makes the Maragang Hill organization conduct courses for the guides so that they are always mentally and physically prepared, even if any incident occurs.

Third, the guides have the role of giving information about flora and fauna to the tourists. Maragang Hill is rich in biodiversity, like red monkeys, also known as Lotong or Maragang by the local community. The conservation status of Lotong has been categorised as vulnerable, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The top of the peak is named after that monkey because it became the main route to the west or east of the forest. In addition, pitchers, which are unique plants, are found around Maragang trail too. The guide will give out information to the climbers to keep their interest in hiking and to make the trip much more fun and less tedious. This will also give out additional knowledge to the climbers. By sharing knowledge, climbers will start to appreciate the environment. This brings good to nature that has been made into the CBE area. In addition to bringing profit, nature is also preserved by the learning tourists gain from guides about flora and fauna found at Maragang Hill.

The fourth responsibility of guides is about hiking rules. Each activity carried out under Maragang Hill has its own rules. For example, tourists should always keep the area clean by not littering. Other than that, listening to instructions from the guide is very important and is one of the hiking rules that must obey by all the parties. Informant 5 stresses this issue:

"Usually, when we give a briefing, some don't listen. We try to reprimand first in a good way. Besides, for me, the undisciplined are those who throw garbage and pick out

> *flowers around the trail. But what I usually see is just shouting."* Informant 5, 2022.

In Maragang Hill, rules are highly emphasised because, without rules, an organisation will not be able to function properly and systematically. In addition, the rules are essential so that hiking goes smoothly and the ecotourism area is maintained well.

Tourist Guides Challenges
This study also indicated tourist guides' challenges while conducting CBE in Maragang Hill. Analysis of both methods, in-depth interviews, and surveys showed that there were four challenges faced by guides. Among them are funded, the nature of tourists, management systems, and communication.

Financial Problems and Allowances
The issue of funds is an issue often mentioned by informants. This happens because every aspect of building Maragang Hill is done by the community members themselves without the help of any party. When financial problems appear as an issue, it will cause other problems to appear as well. For example, the distribution of payment of community members involved and the problem of getting materials while improving the trail. This statement is supported by an interview conducted with Maragang's manager,

> *"The funds are for buying all those things, and we have to have funds like equipment for all the construction",*
> Informant 2.

In addition, informant 4 stated that although there was help from NGOs, it only came after they saw the potential of Maragang Hill as successful community-based ecotourism. Before Maragang Hill became famous and went up as it is now, all the construction was done by the community members. This clearly shows that help from outsiders is little, and it is difficult to get the help needed.

> *"When we opened this Maragang, we started from empty plastic, so even a nail was collected from the villagers. So slowly, we work ourselves up. Like the first platform was built in 2017, the second in 2018 and the third platform was built in 2019. So, step by step,"* Informant 4.

Next, the allowance issue is also discussed under financial problems because it is related to each other. But this issue is not as big as the financial issue in Maragang Hill. There were a few informants from the results of the interview and survey stating that they hope for an increase in their salaries. This is in line with the increase in the price of goods and the economic problems that plague the country.

> *"So far, it's satisfactory. If possible, the price of goods is increasing day by day, so maybe we will make a petition to the climber if he agrees that his payment will be increased by RM20-RM30. Increase the guide fee slightly, the same as for the vehicle".* Informant 5.

> *"The payment to the guide is always not enough. Because what we're looking after is not a tree stump, right? Human life, so his risk is very high. If anything happens, the first responder is the guide. So, if you think it carefully, it is not enough, but we balance it with our tasks and what we are involved in".* Informant 5.

The Various Attitude of the Tourists
This became a challenge because the number of tourists consistently exceeds the number of community members, indirectly inviting various reactions and tourists. If the tourists can adapt to changes quickly, it is easier for the guides and organisers to take care of them. But if community members collide with tourists who are chattier and more challenging to adapt to changes, it will make tasks difficult. From the interviews, most tourists who came showed a variety of reactions. For example:

> *"For me, the challenge when bringing tourists so far is to serve them only. You have to be patient because sometimes the challenge is significant. You want to control every tourist. If there are more than five people, you must take care of 5 heads.* Informants 4.

The above statement is also supported by informant 3. She stated that with experience climbing Maragang more than 200 times and is also a mountain guide on Mount Kinabalu, she had met various types of climbers. It is a process for the guide to handle the situation if the climber does not listen to directions. Therefore, among the criteria to be a guide, he needs to be patient and able to overcome the situation calmly.

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> *"He's like, the longer we go up; he's asking how far away?*
> *Not close. When he goes up 3 minutes, is it far away? We'll*
> *psycho him a little, talk later, we're in the herbal area now, if*
> *we make him talk, he'll be careless and forget to ask"*
> Informant 3.

Next, although it is difficult to contain the diverse nature of climbers, the most worrying is when climbers don't listen to instructions and safety briefings by the guides. Throughout the interviews conducted, the majority said that the safety aspect is essential when doing climbing activities, and they are very strict in such matters. Briefing given before the climb is essential to maintain the safety of climbers and guide themselves. This is to avoid the risk of falling and severe injury to those who follow the activity.

> *"Usually, when we give a briefing, some don't listen. We try*
> *to reprimand in a good way first. Otherwise, we call*
> *Maragang's hill department."* Informant 5.

Maragang Hill Ecotourism Activity Management System Needs to Be More Systematic
A good management system will develop an organization; therefore, it is important to have a layout and system that can make it easier for the organization to work. It became a challenge because, before the booking system, the Maragang only used the WhatsApp application, which could have been more practical to receive a large number of climbers at one time. Maragang Hill also did not use the booking method through the website initially because the number of people who want to climb is less than it is now. As Informant 6 mentioned:

> *"Before this, we did not have a good system to manage this*
> *Maragang. We received climbers before using the*
> *WhatsApp application. But due to the high demand and we*
> *cannot control the entry of tourists ourselves, so we*
> *created a system using the booking system. That's why we*
> *created a website where climbers can access and book*
> *directly through the website. But through the limit we have*
> *set".* Informant 6.

In addition, this management system is also related to the relationship between the guide and the manager. A good relationship among them will minimise the occurrence of misunderstandings and further affect the management of Maragang Hill. This relationship needs to be maintained and mutually tolerant because without the leader, there will be no one to lead, and without the guides,

Maragang Hill will not be moved until now. Informant 8 expresses his views on this issue:

> *"The relationship between the guide and manager is very important. Sometimes manager also gets dizzy looking for a guide when no one comes, so the challenge is that he gets angry. So, before he does the calling, come there ready. The most important thing is respect".* Informant 8.

Management system in scheduling also plays an important role. If it is not organized well and effectively, the number of guides available is insufficient with the number of climbers who came during that period. Scheduling is also essential so that it is consistent with the work of other community members, such as gardening and carpentry.

Table 1.1: Maragang Hill Ecotourism Activity Management System Needs to Be More Systematic According to Respondents (N= 63)

No.	Matter		Likert Scale					Total
			SD	D	N	A	SA	
1	I need to gain more exposure as a tourist guide by attending safety courses and training.	%	0	0	7.9	28.6	63.5	100
		Freq	0	0	5	18	40	63
2	Training as a tourist guide informally is sufficient for me.	%	1.6	7.9	20.6	31.75	38.1	100
		Freq	1	5	13	20	24	63
3	The individualistic attitude among tourist guides causes the relationship gap between them to grow.	%	1.6	4.8	22.2	30.2	41.3	100
		Freq	1	3	14	19	26	63
4	I have limitations in handling hiking equipment.	%	9.5	11.1	34.9	20.6	23.8	100
		Freq	6	7	22	13	15	63
Note: SD; Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly Agree								

Source: Authors,2022

The above statement has been supported by the results of the survey. 63.5% representing 40 people, overwhelmingly agree that they need to get more exposure as a tourist guide by attending safety courses and training, while those who agree were 28.6% representing 18 people. This shows that almost 100% of respondents agree they need to attend courses to strengthen their exposure to

safety aspects. Next, for informant training aspect was also approved by respondents, which 69.85% representing 44 people. Those who disagree are a total of 9.5% representing only six people. This proves that training informally with community members who are former Mount Kinabalu guides is still relevant until now. In addition, an individualistic attitude can cause a gap between guides was approved by 71.5% representing 45 respondents. This has proven that the attitude is mutual tolerance and helping each other is essential among guides. Disagree with this statement only represents 6.4% which is only four people out of 63 people. This survey also found that limitations in handling hiking equipment are also a possible challenge to guides. 44.4% representing 28 people, agree with the statement, while 20.6%, 13 people, disagree. This is because they have been guides for extended periods and have pervasive experience. Therefore, no hiking equipment becomes a problem for them. 34.9% representing 22 people, chose medium scale because there are tools that are easy to handle and those that are difficult to operate. Hence, the choice on a medium scale was selected by the 22 guides.

Language Problems when Communicating with Tourists
Issues related to language and communication will arise if it relates to society. As a manager and guide who must constantly face various tourists, it is unavoidable in tourism because with the presence of tourists, there will be revenue that goes into the organisation. According to informant 8 in the interview, their experience as a mountain guide in Kinabalu made the issue of speaking in a foreign language, such as English, not a big deal because, from experience, he learns from mistakes and corrects them. Informant 8 reports on this issue.

> *"Okay, I'm used to getting that. For me, if you get foreign people, you have to speak, then if you get Chinese, if they can speak Malaysian, I will speak Malaysian, so they understand. The most important thing is communication so that we understand each other".* Informant 8.

According to informant 6, he stated that Maragang Hill lacks guides who can communicate well with foreign tourists. He also stated that the language issue is a challenge because of the difficulty in understanding the wishes of the climbers when bringing them. But the guides at Maragang Hill will try to provide the best service and communicate even using simple sentences. The most important thing, according to him, is mutual understanding between the guide and climber.

> *"We lack guides who can communicate well with climbers. For example, if we get from Australia, Korea, or Japan. But usually, the guides who get tourists from abroad will specialise in guides who can communicate in good English. We usually do that"*. Informant 6.

The above statement has been supported by a survey conducted on 63 respondents. The total number of respondents who chose scales 4 and 5 is 41.28%, representing 26 people. While those who choose scales 1 and 2 that disagree are 12.74%, representing eight people. Although those who disagree have a small amount compared to those who agree, respondents who chose scale 3, which is medium, are 46%, representing 29 people. This matter proves that guides can communicate in foreign languages, but self-doubt among themselves causes this communication issue to persist among them. In addition, in the aspect of having limitations to communicating with foreign tourists, most choose to agree, which is 44.5%, representing 28 people. For those who choose on the scale, the medium is 33.3%, equivalent to 17 people.

Table 1.2: Language Problems When Communicating with Tourists According to Respondents (N=63)

No.	Matter		Likert Scale					Total
			SD	D	N	A	SA	
1	I can communicate in English and Foreign Languages	%	7.9	4.8	46.0	22.2	19.1	100
		Freq	5	3	29	14	12	63
2	I have limited communication with foreign tourists.	%	7.9	14.3	33.3	28.6	15.9	100
		Freq	5	9	21	18	10	63
Note: SD; Strongly Disagree, D: Disagree, N: Neutral, A: Agree, SA: Strongly Agree								

Source: Authors,2022

This point shows that they acknowledge limitations when communicating with foreign climbers. Maragang Hill members continue to perform their duties as professional guides and transparently despite facing some challenges. Based on the analysis above, tourist guides' responsibilities through CBE are equally considered balanced, and the challenges that came through are related to each other, as it is proven by both methods, in-depth interviews and surveys. Both methods show that guides in Maragang Hill can lift their roles, although it might be caused trouble and insufficient by time. Tourist guides are seen to work happily and manage to play their roles perfectly to entertain tourists and to bring a positive outcome to Maragang Hill organisation and Kampung

Mesilou from CBE activity which is hill trekking. The guides' responsibility in Maragang Hill is to organize, and each of them knows their schedule well and tries to give their best in guiding tourists. Most tourists kept repeating their hiking as the services provided were excellent, and they were willing to pay to enjoy the majestic view of Maragang and Mount Kinabalu. As for the challenges that tourist guides faced, they overcame them. Some of the challenges will stay as it came equally with the hiking activity, for example, the various nature of tourists and the language barrier. For the various type of tourists, guides can only be patient and hope those future tourists able to be more considerate and able to fit into changes quickly. This helps both parties to have significant and amazing memories while hiking. As for language and communication, hoping guides can learn and try their best so that tourists and guides can understand each other and minimize miscommunication. Besides that, funds and systematic management were the challenges Maragang overcome in recent years. Maragang Hill is making more as hiking becomes one of the popular ecotourism activities in Sabah. This led to Maragang in having better and more systematic management in their organisation, such as a booking system by a website and a better trail for hiking than before.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study has demonstrated an understanding of the tourists' guides' responsibility and the challenges faced by them through CBE activity. The responsibility shown by guides is that they have high self-esteem and tend to be more responsible with their job scope. Guides that have been interviewed agree with the statement that guiding is a job that brings joy to them and tourists too. Maragang Hill guides are dedicated to putting their best into every hiking moment. This study took a turn by looking at the challenges faced by tourist guides, and they were able to overcome some of the challenges. Pinpointing the problem that guides faced helps to make Maragang Hill organisation better and more independent in the future. The existing challenges occur as they involve the relationship between humans and nature. This then led Maragang Hill into much deeper responsibility than before. This study is expected to be able to provide some reference and additional information to readers and subsequent researchers.

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