



PLANNING MALAYSIA:
Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners
VOLUME 21 ISSUE 1 (2023), Page 1 – 11

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AND QUALITY OF LIFE AMONG THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN CAMERON HIGHLANDS

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Abstract

The primary objective of the research is to examine at the relation between responsible tourism and community quality of life. A questionnaire survey was carried out to gather responses from a sample of 322 locals from the Malaysian Cameron Highlands' Ulu Telum, Tanah Rata, and Ringlet subdistricts. The data analysis revealed that there was no correlation between the quality of life in the local community and any of the four pillars of responsible tourism (economic, environmental, social, and cultural). Although tourism has an impact on locals' quality of life in tourist destinations, it can only measure residents' opinions and not their actual experiences. Or, to put it another way, it may not be appropriate to assess locals' quality of life using indices of tourist impacts. According to the findings of this study, the components of responsible tourism may only partially represent the quality of life among local communities affected by tourism in a host community. The results of this study suggest that the elements of responsible tourism might need to accurately reflect the quality of life of the local communities impacted by tourism in a host community.

Keywords: Quality of Life, Local Community, Responsible Tourism, Cameron Highland

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, regardless of the outcome, sustainable development has become an important aim of any human activity, including the tourism industry (Miocic et al., 2016). Aside from the favourable economic advantages, tourism has a detrimental influence on some places by deteriorating local populations' environment and socio-cultural aspects. As a result, tourism has emphasised the importance of sustainable development at all levels. However, the industry faces a number of sustainability challenges, including resource manipulation, economic uncertainty, and changes in tourism demand, prompting tourism policymakers to promote and provide the benefits of renewal and resilience to residents and areas (Hanafiah et al., 2016). The idea of sustainable tourism has long presented a conundrum to those working in the business, as well as to policymakers, researchers, and governments. Confusion occurs from tourism's rapid growth, which can harm the environment because it is frequently regarded in economic terms (Azinuddin et al., 2022a). Hence, responsible tourism was presented and formed in tourism study and practice in response to these difficulties in order to improve the existing sustainable tourist development (Caruana et al., 2014; Spenceley, 2010). There has been a rising public interest in the notion of responsible tourism, a movement that aims to reduce any negative consequences of travel activities (Weeden, 2014). Tourism requires a high level of responsibility (Goodwin, 2011). Responsible tourism has therefore become a viable solution to several urgent challenges such as excessive destination attractions (Hanafiah et al., 2016).

The lives of the people in a community are impacted by tourism once it becomes a destination; hence, the support of the whole population in the tourist community is critical for tourism development, planning, operational success, and sustainability (Aman et al., 2013; Jurowski, 1994). Indeed, community lifestyles are thought to affect structural changes in the business, such as local economic, social-cultural, and environmental improvements, through sustainable tourism expansion (Dyer et al., 2007). For a start, the locals are able to get crucial insights into the plans of networking events or programmes that are beneficial for the expansion and development of tourism attractions and businesses through recognising the characteristics of Small and Medium-Sized Tourism Enterprises (SMTEs) entrepreneurs (Azinuddin et al., 2020). Therefore, finding the ideal balance between the financial return and the preservation of sociocultural diversity and the environment has become difficult for those involved in the tourism industry (Azinuddin et al., 2022b).

According to Faulkner and Tideswell (2010), while expanding tourism in a community, the citizens' perceived quality of life is a crucial factor to consider; hence, the effects of tourism on quality of life should be regularly examined to minimise any negative consequences. Various studies have discussed the potential consequences of tourism on citizens' quality of life,

according to Alonso and Nyanjom (2016), but not in connection to sustainable tourism, especially responsible tourism. As a result, this paper focuses on responsible tourism and the local community's quality of life in Malaysia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Responsible Tourism

The definition of responsible tourism has been a source of heated discussion, both in theory and in reality (Caruana, 2014). According to Weeden (2014), responsible tourism focuses on minimising environmental interference, respecting cultural variety, boosting local people's engagement in delivering tourist services, and increasing consumer and visitor happiness. Responsible tourism focuses on the responsible consumption of tourist products and the economic, social, and environmental impacts and advantages that this sort of tourism should have on the environment and local communities (Petrovici, 2014). Responsible tourism is a tourist management strategy aimed at maximising economic, social, and environmental advantages while minimising negative consequences for destinations (Xin & Chan, 2014).

According to Cooper et al. (2008), responsible tourism cannot be a viable alternative to mass tourism. Mass tourism, it is arguable, may cause a location to suffer from a slew of social and environmental issues. As it turns out, the notion of responsible tourism arose in response to mass tourism (McCabe et al., 2012; Wheeler, 1991). 'Sustainable tourism,' 'ecotourism,' and other natural and social tourism practises have many parallels to responsible tourism (Caruana et al., 2014). Sustainable tourism and responsible tourism have a tight link and are frequently used interchangeably (Glen, 2017). The purpose of responsible tourism and sustainable tourism is the same (Hanafiah et al., 2016). On the other hand, the notion of sustainability is accepted as a theory, whereas the concept of responsibility is accepted as a practice (Mihalic, 2016). Responsible tourism is a more realistic strategy than sustainable tourism (Glen, 2017).

According to Sariskumar and Bhavan (2018), Mathew and Nimmi (2021), responsible tourism may be classified into four dimensions: economic, social, cultural, and environmental.

1. Economic Responsibility

According to Mathew and Nimmi (2021), economic responsibility derived from responsible tourism strengthens the community's belief that tourism activities are aimed at generating better employment opportunities, upgrading skills, improving living standards, domestic procurement, and supporting local businesses. Their life domain satisfaction with material well-being, which reflects their contentment with personal goods and amenities, rises and improves as a

result of their view of economic responsibility. Kim and colleagues (Kim et al., 2013).

2. Social Responsibility

Social responsibility requires combating the sexual exploitation of human beings, particularly the exploitation of minors, and being more sensitive to the host culture, preserving and supporting social and cultural diversity. Furthermore, when a community believes that responsible tourism practices in a particular destination are consistent with community goals, such as activities geared toward local community involvement, facilitating social development programmes, developing social infrastructure, and other socially relevant activities (Mathew & Nimmi, 2021).

3. Cultural Responsibility

According to Mathew and Nimmi (2021), responsible tourism is also responsible for maintaining local customs and culture. Local arts and culture promotion, the sale of regional mementoes, cultural exchange, and landscape maintenance are a few examples of how local culture, traditions, and customs are supported and encouraged. When it comes to community views, cultural responsibility initiatives can have a cascading impact, affecting people's emotional well-being perspectives. In such that a destination tends to make the most of its natural resources and potential while also considering the economic and social well-being of the society (Rasdi et al, 2022).

4. Environmental Responsibility

According to the Cape Town Declaration (2002), environmental responsibility is ensuring that negative consequences are minimised, and good benefits are maximised throughout the life cycle of tourism establishments and operations, including the planning and design phase.

Quality of Life

According to Ko (2014), residents' overall assessments of the connection between existing societal realities and ideals important to their lives can be described as quality of life. This operational definition looks at the community, concentrating on the subjective aspects of a citizen's life input. This enables local decision-makers to obtain feedback from individuals on how successfully local governments respond to local requests considering changing local conditions. The terms "quality of life," "happiness," "well-being," and "utility" are commonly used interchangeably (Yassin et al., 2011). Appreciating the community's quality of life helps local decision-makers evaluate how successfully local governments react to residents' demands and how efficiently local resources are allocated. The term "quality of life" refers to comparing a community's or society's well-being

to a particular evaluation of an individual's or group's circumstances (Chahal and Devi, 2016). According to Gullion et al. (2015), "quality of life" is a broad concept that may signify various things to different people.

Quality of life, as it pertains to the economic, social, and environmental goals (Cusack, 2019), and beyond the limited economic performance techniques, such as gross domestic product, may be the most important aim of sustainable development (Dwyer, 2020). Improved quality of life may be accomplished, according to Andereck and Nyaupane (2011), by expanding tourism offerings that can be enjoyed by residents, such as festivals, restaurants, natural and cultural attractions, and outdoor recreational possibilities. Andereck and Nyaupane (2011) identified eight domains of tourism quality of life, including community well-being, urban issues, the way of life, community pride and awareness, natural and cultural preservation, economic strength, recreation amenities, crime, and substance abuse in the context of tourism. Urban concerns, community economic strength, family and personal well-being, the way of life, and community awareness and amenities are the four tourism quality of life dimensions identified by Liang and Hui (2016).

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a descriptive research approach using cross-sectional data. The data for this study was obtained at a single moment in time, hence it was a cross-sectional survey. A comprehensive review of prior research in similar fields was conducted in order to determine the instruments required for the questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into three sections: Section A is for demographic information; Section B is for responsible tourism and Section C is for quality of life. The target population and sampling unit for this research is the local community who lives in Cameron Highlands, Pahang, Malaysia. Cluster sampling was utilised to approach the sample in this study since it is more accurate in terms of representing subgroups in samples and purposeful in terms of generalizability. According to Hair et al., (2007), cluster sampling considers the target population to be made up of diverse groupings, and geographic area sampling is the most common kind of cluster sample. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the local community at three sub-districts in Cameron Highlands which are Ulu Telum, Tanah Rata and Ringlet. However, after doing a missing data assessment and data normality assessment, 78 questionnaires were rejected. There were only 322 questionnaires that accepted for further analysis. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 2.3 software for factor analysis, reliability testing, mean, frequency, standard deviation, Pearson's correlation, and linear and multiple regressions.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

From this study, 40.4 per cent of respondents were from the sub-district of Ulu Telum. About 50.6 per cent of respondents were males with 30.1 per cent aged between 21-30 years old and 40.4 per cent living in Cameron Highlands for more than 21 years. A total of 57.1 per cent of respondents were married, and the majority of them (64.3 per cent) were Malay and Muslim (66.8 per cent). Around 33.9 per cent had secondary school education and 32 per cent had income below RM1500. Results reported that most respondents were aware of responsible tourism (92.2 per cent) and 96 per cent had experienced responsible tourism.

The descriptive statistics analysis was conducted to describe and summarise the main characteristics of the data set on each dimension of responsible tourism and quality of life. The mean and standard deviation of each variable was computed to understand the variability and interdependence of the dimensions in this research. Table 1 presents the mean value for each construct that can be measured as high. Environmental responsibility is the highest mean score among all other variables. It indicates that respondents believe environmental responsibility is important for their quality of life.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Each Construct

Variables	No. of Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Economic Responsibility	8	4.3661	.47807
Environmental Responsibility	8	4.4686	.46940
Social Responsibility	8	4.2873	.49083
Cultural Responsibility	7	4.1925	.52341
Quality of Life	11	3.5960	.87656

Note: N=331

Measurement scale: 1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree

Measurement level: 1.00 – 2.49: Low; 2.50 – 3.49: Moderate; 3.50- 5.00: High

In this study, responsible tourism was evaluated from the perspective of local populations in Cameron Highlands, Malaysia, using four categories: 1) economic responsibility, 2) environmental responsibility, 3) social duty, and 4) cultural responsibility. The findings suggest that all aspects of responsible tourism are critical to responsible tourism activities. However, when compared to the others, environmental responsibility has the highest mean value. According to Costa (2019), the environment is concerned with the planet's natural resources and how society, communities, and companies use them. Since there were so many environmental difficulties in Cameron Highlands, environmental responsibility may be considered an essential component of responsible tourism.

As stated by Hair (2010), the correlations between the variables were analysed to examine the relationships between the variable of the model (significant and positive correlations). Based on Table 2, the results show that

there is no relationship between each independent variable and dependent variable ($p > 0.05$). Because the p-value is greater than 0.05, the data demonstrate that there is no relationship between all components of responsible tourism and quality of life in the local community.

Table 2: Correlation between Responsible Tourism and Quality of Life

		TRT	TQOL
TRT	Pearson Correlation	1	.086
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.122
	N	322	322
TQOL	Pearson Correlation	.086	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.122	
	N	322	322

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result contradicts with previous study by Mathew and Kumar (2014), Mathew and Sreejesh (2017), Sariskumar and Bhavan (2018), Shaheb et al (2020) and Saldanha et.al (2020). However, Yu et al. (2014) suggested that while tourism impacts influence locals' quality of life in tourism destinations, measures for tourism impact can only capture residents' perceptions rather than their real lived experiences. It may not be appropriate to assess the quality of life of locals using indications of visitor impacts. The results of this study proposed that the elements of responsible tourism might not accurately reflect the quality of life among local communities impacted by tourism.

Natural diversity should be managed responsibly, restored, and the capacity and kind of tourism that the environment can sustain, as well as the integrity of vulnerable ecosystems and protected areas (Mathew & Kumar, 2014). Furthermore, most prior research concluded that environmental sustainability must be safeguarded for current and future generations as a natural ecosystem (Chalal and Devi, 2016; Sutawa, 2012; Ciraci, Turgut and Kerimoglu, 2008). As a result, the local community believed that environmental responsibility should be a significant concern while practising responsible tourism and sought advice from environmental and conservation professionals.

CONCLUSION

The results of this survey are based on replies from local individuals in a specific location. As a result, the findings cannot be fully generalised. If the data was obtained from several locations in Malaysia, the strength of the association between variables might change. It is worth noting that the survey instrument gathered responses on responsible tourism, destination sustainability, and quality

of life. As a consequence, like other survey studies, may introduce bias into the results.

Future research should broaden the geographic scope of the questionnaire distribution. This research is limited to Cameron Highlands in Pahang, Malaysia, and excludes other highland tourism attractions such as Genting Highlands and Frazer's Hills. In order to generalise the study's conclusions, it would be equally vital to widen the study's geographical scope. In addition, future research might include other geographic areas, such as island tourism destinations.

These findings may aid government agencies in better understanding individuals' complicated and changing requirements, resulting in more responsive policy decisions. Government authorities must consider public safety, parks and recreational services, natural environmental conservation, sanitation, emergency management, and local economic realities when allocating funds. As part of the tourism stakeholders, it is imperative that the government deliver competitive products and services, whilst maintain the tourist destination's prosperity and livelihood, networks, and expertise (Azinuddin, 2022c).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was supported by Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) through Fundamental Research Grant Scheme FRGS/1/2019/WAB12/UNISZA/01/1, titled 'Developing Typology and Institutional Framework of Overtourism to Enhance Destination Sustainability in Malaysia'.

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Received: 28th Feb 2023. Accepted: 31st March 2023