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EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PLACE ATTACHMENT AND YOUTH'S INVOLVEMENT IN RICE FIELD ACTIVITIES

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Abstract

Youth's experience, knowledge and values in relation to rice field activities play an important role in motivating the youth to get involved in these activities. However, there is a lack of research that focuses on the relationship between place attachment and activity involvement. The aim of this paper is to explore the relationship between place attachment and rural youth's involvement in rice field activities. Three homestays in Kedah were selected as case studies and quantitative (302 questionnaires) approaches were applied to achieve the objective. The questionnaire survey was conducted among youth aged 20 - 34 years old. Major findings in this study include a positive relationship between place attachment and youth activity involvement. Youth who have knowledge, experience, and values in relation to rice field activities are inclined to be involved in homestay activities. The findings of this study contribute to the theories regarding youth activity involvement and place attachment. It is suggested that practitioners in built environment, tourism planning and landscape planning as well as parents should help to encourage the youth to get involved in rice field activities in homestay programmes and in their daily lives.

Keywords: Place Attachment, Activity Involvement, Knowledge, Experience, Values

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INTRODUCTION

Homestays in rural areas that are connected to well-preserved cultural landscapes have higher potential as a tourism destination and currently, they are slowly gaining attention among tourists. Homestay programmes have become more active as the government realizes that this programme has the potential in developing communities, especially among rural communities (Aminudin & Jamal, 2006). The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia, (MOTAC, 2012) identifies homestay as a viable CBT project for rural people to take on since it utilises existing resources, such as the local culture, lifestyle, and heritage; economic activities; recreation; natural attractions; and environmental conservation. It is recommended that homestays to be a primary activity of agro-based tourism (Bachok, 2019). There are 224 homestay programmes including 494 villages and 3,323 homestay operators throughout Malaysia (MOTAC, 2024). The homestay programmes involve learning the culture of locals in rural settings hence, the local involvement plays an important role in activities provided in the programme. The activities involved in the setting of rice fields need the involvement of local resident to represent the authenticity of real products. Therefore, the youth play an important part in homestay programmes as they depict the lifestyle of local communities. In tourism studies, focuses on community-based tourism (CBT), youth play an important role to develop the homestay programme in rural areas. Based on the figure from the Institute for Youth Research Malaysia in 2015, there were 13.88 million youth aged 15-39 which represents 45.8% of 30.26 million of the population in Malaysia. To ensure that the homestay programme will be sustained, youth involvement is a crucial component. They should be encouraged to get involved in the homestay activities. The main factors that influence youth to get involved in homestay programmes are due to interest (Kayat and Mohd Nor, 2006; Rasid et al., 2011), income (Kayat and Mohd Nor, 2006; Rasid et al., 2011; Harun et al., 2017), family support (Kayat, 2007; Harun et al., 2017), natural environment (Rasid et al., 2011) and motivation (Kayat, 2007). In Malaysia, the government took the alternative to improve the tourism sector as there is a concern that the growth of the tourism activities will degrade the environment, society and decrease the value of the culture in the local community (Seventh Malaysia Plan, 1996-2000). However, youth living in rural areas are less interested in participating in the tourism industry, especially in homestay activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The combination of involvement and place attachment occurred in tourism development whereby in 2003, Kyle combined these concepts where they were successful in measuring the relationship between involvement and place attachment among hikers in leisure activities (Kyle et al., 2003). Meanwhile, Kyle et al., (2004) conceptualised place attachment as an attitudinal

construct that consists of three components: affect, cognition, and behavioural intention. According to the authors' conceptualisation, the 'effect' component refers to emotional responses or activity in the sympathetic nervous system (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). The cognitive component refers to beliefs and knowledge structures that relate to the object or place (p. 442). Finally, behavioural intention refers to behavioural commitment or an action that affects both 'affect' and 'cognitive' components (p. 442). Studies that focused on place attachment have shown relationships between place attachment and several other variables, including management preferences and user behaviour (Ji et al., 2023, Bricker & Kerstetter 2000; Kyle, Bricker, Graefe, & Wickham 2004), and activity involvement (Kyle et al. 2003). Place attachment can have significant implications for recreation resource planners and managers (Williams, 2002), ranging from support for new developments to managing user conflicts in existing areas. The experience with a place may involve economic, social or political aspects, for example, the usage of natural resources in generating a source of income. Social interaction among the local community including youth also enriches people's experience with the concept of place. Activity involvement can be defined as unobservable motivation or interest towards a recreational activity (Kyle et al., 2003). Place attachment is the sense of purpose and the sense of belonging that people associate with a specific place. It is the relationship people have with an environment, including the extent that a place helps give meaning to people's lives (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000).

A number of studies have looked at the relationships of activity involvement and place attachment to visitor satisfaction. Hwang, Lee, and Chen (2005) showed that both activity involvement and place attachment have significant effects on visitor satisfaction with interpretative services. Some studies have shown that activity involvement has a positive effect on place attachment (Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2003; Hou, Lin, & Morais, 2005; Kyle & Mowen, 2005). A study by Hou, Lin, and Morais (2005) indicated that enduring activity involvement has a direct effect on attachment to a cultural tourism destination, and Kyle and Mowen (2005) showed that activity involvement partially influences place attachment (both place dependence and place identity). Lee (2003) investigated the relationships among service quality, satisfaction, activity involvement, and place attachment in predicting destination loyalty. The results showed that activity involvement positively influenced satisfaction. Finally, Pan, Wu, and Chou (2018) specifically looked at the impacts of activity involvement and place attachment on the satisfaction of volunteer interpreters at Taiwan's National Museum of Natural Science. They concluded that both have positive influences on satisfaction and observed that the higher the involvement or place attachment, the higher the satisfaction.

As already noted, existing studies demonstrated the relationship between two of the recreation motivations, activity involvement and place

attachment, in the recreationists' psychological context. Furthermore, many studies used place dependence and place identity as dimensions for measuring place attachment (Bricker & Kerstetter, 2000; Gross & Brown, 2008). Thus, we suggest that the relationship between place dependence and place identity should be included as part of the overall test model to obtain a more complete understanding of the formative process of place attachment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative method, which is a questionnaire survey. The target population of youth is according to the statistics of youths in homestay villages and the selection of youth involved youth aged between 15 - 39 years old. To select the sample, the researcher needs to have a list of the units of the investigated population as a sampling frame. The researcher used census data as a technique to distribute the questionnaire surveys. Census is a technique that the researcher gives the questionnaire surveys to every member of the population in the study sites. In this research, the researcher used the census surveys in three homestays (Homestay D'Belimbing, Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai and Homestay Kg. Jeruju). The three case studies have the same rice field settings. The rationale for choosing these three homestays is to explore the similarities and differences on place attachment and youth's involvement in rice field activities in homestay. Moreover, the selected case studies have different age distributions and social interactions between local communities. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to the Chairman of the Youth's Association and *Majlis Pengurusan Komuniti Kampung* (MPKK). From the census data, total youths aged 15 - 39 years old in three homestays are 320. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to all youths through homestay operators in each homestay but the total collected questionnaires were only 302 respondents. The questionnaire was developed to explore the perspective of cognitive elements, place attachment and activity involvement among rural youth in homestay villages. The questionnaire for this study has three sections as listed:

- i. Section A: Respondents' profiles
- ii. Section B: Activity Involvement
- iii. Section C: Perception on Place attachment dimension

Multiple regressions were used to explore the relationship between one continuous dependent variable and a number of independent variables or predictors. Multiple regressions can be used to examine how well a set of variables or constructs predict another variable or construct. Also, multiple regression can identify which variable is the best predictor of the outcome (Pallant, 2013). There are three types of multiple regression analyses, namely, standard or simultaneous, hierarchical or sequential, and stepwise (Pallant, 2013).

This study adopted the stepwise type of multiple regressions to examine the relationship between place attachment and youth's activity involvement in the rice field. In stepwise multiple regression, the goal is to find a set of independent variables which significantly influence the dependent variable.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Multiple regressions were employed to determine whether knowledge, experience and values are related to rural youth's involvement in rice field activities. Multiple regression is a test that explains the relationship between one dependent variable and a number of independent variables or predictors (Pallant, 2013). In simple regression, the aim is to predict the dependent variable with a single independent variable. Meanwhile, multiple regression aims to predict the dependent variable with any independent variables. From the results from three homestays, only one predictor variable which is knowledge has the strongest relationship with activity involvement. Although knowledge is the main predictor in three homestays, the other two predictors which are values and experience also have a relationship with youth's involvement. In Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing, two predictors have a strong relationship with youth's involvement. The predictor variables are experience and knowledge. In contrast with Homestay Kg. Jeruju, the main predictors are values and knowledge. Similar to both homestays Kg D'Belimbing and Kg Jeruju, the results from Kg. Pantai Jamai showed that knowledge is the main predictor variable that has a relationship with youth's involvement in homestay activities. In conclusion, the main predictor variable in this research is knowledge but three predictors which are knowledge, experience and values have a strong relationship with youth's involvement in homestay activities.

Relationship between place attachment and activity involvement in Kg. D' Belimbing

In Kg. D'Belimbing, significantly, [F (1,104) = 780.16, p < 0.05], accounted for 88.2 percent of the variance (R² = 882.) in relation to the involvement of youth in the homestay activities. This means that experience (B = -.94, p < 0.05) is a major indicator that causes youth's activity involvement in homestay programmes. The combination of experience (B = -.91), p < 0.05) and knowledge (B = -0.12), p < 0.05) increased (89.5-88.2) percent or 1.3 percent of the variance R² = 0.895) in the variable criterion [F (2,103) = 438.01, p < .05]. ANOVA test results show that there is a correlation between the two predictor variables with the criterion variable significant level of p < 0.05.

Table 1: Relationship between activity involvement and place attachment dimension in Kg. D' Belimbing

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients
		B	Std. Error	Beta
1	(Constant)	2.918	.056	
	Experience	-.507	.018	-.939
2	(Constant)	3.454	.163	
	Experience	-.488	.018	-.906
	Knowledge	-.171	.049	-.116

Note: R-squared= 0.882, R- square adjusted = .0.882, [F (2,103) = 438.01, p<.05],

**Significant at .05 level

ANOVA test results show that there is a correlation between the two predictor variables with the criterion variable significant level of $p < .05$.

Table 2: ANOVA test results in Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squa	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22.850	1	22.850	780.161	.000 ^b
	Residual	3.046	104	.029		
	Total	25.896	105			
2	Regression	23.172	2	11.586	438.013	.000 ^c
	Residual	2.724	103	.026		
	Total	25.896	105			

a. Dependent Variable: Involvement

b. Predictors: (Constant), acttt

c. Predictors: (Constant), acttt, knowledge

Relationship between place attachment and activity involvement in Kg. Pantai Jamai

Table 3 shows the relationship between activity involvement and place attachment in Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai. In Kg. Pantai Jamai, significantly, [F (1, 94) = 34.76, $p < 0.05$] accounted for 27 percent of the variance ($R^2 = 270$) in relation to the involvement of youth in activities of the homestay. This explains that knowledge ($B = 0.52$, $p < 0.05$) is a major indicator that causes youth's activity involvement in homestay programmes compared to experience and values. Even though experience and values are not major indicators, these two indicators have positive relationships with rural youth's activity involvement. This data also explains that youth who have a higher knowledge of rice field activities have a strong attachment to the place and are more involved in homestay activities.

Table 3: Relationship between activity involvement and place attachment dimension in Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients
	B	Std. Error	Beta
1 (Constant)	-1.682	.513	
Knowledge	.768	.130	.520

Note: R-squared = 0.882, R- square adjusted = .0262, [F (1, 94) =34.76, p< 0.05] Significant at .05 level

ANOVA test results in Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai is shown in Table 3. The data shows that there is a correlation between the two predictor variables with the criterion variable significant level of $p < 0.05$. ANOVA test results show that there is a correlation between the two predictor variables with the criterion variable significant level of $p < 0.05$.

Table 4: ANOVA test results in Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	5.759	1	5.759	34.759	.000 ^b
Residual	15.574	94	.166		
Total	21.333	95			

a. Dependent Variable: Involvement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Knowledge

The data confirms that rural youth who have higher knowledge have a positive relationship with activity involvement. When youth have knowledge on the activities, they are interested to do the activities and learn about the activities. When tourists come to their village, the rural youth can help the homestay operators to prepare the homestay activities. It is crucial to know about traditional activities because the activities can be passed on to future generations.

Relationship between place attachment and activity involvement in Homestay Kg. Jeruju

Table 5 indicates the relationship between activity involvement and place attachment in Homestay Kg. Jeruju. In Kg. Jeruju, significantly, [F (1,98) = 58.86, $p < .05$], accounted for 37.5 percent of the variance ($R^2 = 0.375$) in relation to the involvement of youth in homestay activities. This means that values ($B = -0.61$, $p < 0.05$) is a major indicator that causes youth’s activity involvement in homestay programmes. The combination of values ($B = -0.57$), $p < 0.05$) and knowledge ($B = -0.21$), $p < 0.05$) increased (41.9-37.5) percent or 4.4 percent of the variance ($R^2 = 0.419$) in the variable criterion [F (2,97) = 34.91, $p < 0.05$].

Table 5: Relationship between activity involvement and place attachment dimension in Homestay Kg. Jeruju

	Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients
		B	Std. Error	Beta
1	(Constant)	2.394	.100	
	Values	-.248	.032	-.613
2	(Constant)	3.125	.289	
	Values	-.230	.032	-.568
	Knowledge	-.259	.096	-.213

From the data, values and knowledge have positive relationships with youth involvement in homestay activities. Youth who have a strong attachment to rice field landscapes are motivated to be involved in homestay activities. This explains that youth who appreciate their surrounding landscapes are attached to the landscape and are excited to get involved in the activities.

Additionally, Table 6 presents the table of ANOVA test results in Homestay Kg. Jeruju. The data shows that there is a correlation between the two predictor variables with the criterion variable significant level of $p < 0.05$. Based on the data, knowledge is most related to the involvement of youth aged between 20-40 years in homestay activities.

Table 6: ANOVA test results in Homestay Kg. Jeruju

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.165	1	8.165	58.857	.000 ^b
	Residual	13.595	98	.139		
	Total	21.760	99			
2	Regression	9.108	2	4.554	34.914	.000 ^c
	Residual	12.652	97	.130		
	Total	21.760	99			

a. Dependent Variable: Involvement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Values

c. Predictors: (Constant), values, knowledge

This study goes deeper into the relationship between youth's involvement in rice field activities and place attachment that focuses on the cognitive element. This research has combined the landscape perception model and the place attachment model to answer the research objectives. This study shows a positive relationship between youth's involvement in rice field activities and place attachment. It is clear that youth who have knowledge, experience, and values in relation to rice field activities are more involved in homestay activities. From the questionnaire survey, the results from the multiple regression analysis

revealed that youth who are involved in rice field activities have a higher relationship with a place attachment element which is knowledge compared to values and experience. The result revealed that the highest factors of youth involvement are because of the interaction with tourists and the opportunity to manage the homestay. This study has proven that youth's involvement in rice field activities has a relationship with a place attachment dimension which is cognitive that includes the elements of experience, knowledge, and values. Social, physical, and economic factors are the main factors that motivate youth to get involved in homestay activities. Although previous studies have discussed homestay involvement, those studies lack focus on youth's homestay activities (Samsudin, 2021). These cognitive elements are also important to sustain traditional activities for future generations. Although the study has brought attention to the connection between landscapes and human perceptions, it should be noted that further research with different methods and larger samples are recommended to strengthen the findings.

Place attachment and activity involvement are positively correlated (Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004; Hou, Lin, & Morais, 2005; Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004). This study found that activity involvement has positive relationship with place attachment dimensions which are knowledge, experience and values on rice field activities. Moreover, more topics on place attachments and activity involvement should also be covered. Therefore, future study is needed to explore into the affective and behavioural elements in place attachment models to know the perception of youth and to sustain the rice field activities in homestay programmes.

CONCLUSION

This study makes two important contributions to the body of knowledge. These include practical and methodological contributions. Practically, findings from this study provide insights into the initiatives to reconnect youth with place attachment in various ways. Government authorities (planners, landscape architects), homestay operators, local community, parents and youth themselves should play an important role to encourage rural youth to get involved in homestay activities. Methodologically, this study has added to the existing literature on reliable methods to be used when conducting research with rural youth in villages. Several limitations in this study need to be addressed in future research. Furthermore, several directions for future research have been delineated. Future research should explore into other factors that influence youth and conduct research in different locations. As a whole, this study gives a significant impact on the development of future generations concerning environmental and cultural landscapes. This study further contributes to rural development and ensuring that Malaysian youth have knowledge on cultural heritage while sustaining the cultural elements for future generations.

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