



## Community Involvement in Tourism Entrepreneurship: A Case Study in Tioman Island, Malaysia

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### **Abstract**

The tourism sector is one of the major economic contributors to most countries. Island tourism is one of the important tourism products of a country and is able to catalyse socio-economic development for the local communities. In Malaysia, studies on local entrepreneurship development in Tioman Island has not been given much attention by researchers. To fill this gap, this study aims to provide information on the field of entrepreneurial tourism in Tioman Island. The main objective of this study is to identify the characteristics of the island community as a tourism entrepreneur and to analyse the problems and challenges faced by the island's tourism entrepreneurs. The findings show that the majority of entrepreneurs are male, aged between 25 to 44, receive education until secondary school and married. Most of the local tourism entrepreneurs run the food and beverage business and manage their businesses for 11 to 15 years and earn a monthly income of RM2001 to RM4000. The local tourism operators also face a few problems such as capital and finance, marketing, business management and infrastructure. At the same time, the entrepreneurs also expect collaboration from the government to play an important role in advancing the island's tourism industry. At the same time, local tourism entrepreneurs also expect cooperation from the government and other authorities to play a role in developing the island's tourism industry.

**Keywords:** Community involvement; Entrepreneurship; Tourism operators; Entrepreneurial characteristics; Problems and challenges

### **1. Introduction**

The tourism sector is one of the main economic driving forces for most countries. In Malaysia, the tourism sector is the second largest contributor to the economy after the manufacturing sector (Ibrahim and Abdul Rasid, 2010). Tourism activity also creates employment opportunities for rural communities where based on the 2009 statistics, 204,000 communities or 5% of rural communities worked in hotel and restaurant activities compared to fishery activities which recorded labor force participation at 2.2% or 74,000 people (Rural Development Master Plan, 2010).

In Malaysia, the factors contributing to economic performance are due to the richness of physical landscapes such as beautiful islands and diversity of fish species, coral reefs and other marine life which

is one of the most beautiful in the world (Mapjabil et al., 2015). Based on the Guidelines for the Planning and Physical Development of Islands and Marine Parks Malaysia, the island is a piece of land that smaller than the continent and larger than coral reefs and surrounded by water (Town and Country Planning Department, Peninsular Malaysia, 2012).

According to Croes (2006), island tourism is one of the important tourism products of a country and can catalyst for socio-economic development for local communities. Meanwhile, Eccles (1995) define island tourism as a tourist activity that occurs within the boundaries of an island. Additionally, an island is also an area comprising a diversity of natural ecosystems such as plant species and wildlife that cannot be found in other areas and therefore, the island area has the potential to be one of the tourist attractions (Brown and Cave, 2010). Furthermore, the tourism sector is often regarded as a catalyst for socioeconomic development for local communities inhabiting the island (Croes, 2006).

Nevertheless, the development of tourism on small islands often faces some socioeconomic problems due to its limited space, limited raw material resources and limited labor resources. Besides, the island area is often associated with its small, narrow, isolated size, exposed to natural disasters, social isolation, and depend on outside areas (Briguglio, 1995; Douglas, 2006). In addition, local entrepreneurs also face problems when seasonal changes occur, especially in small island tourism areas (Getz and Carlsen, 2000). In Malaysia, the island area on the east coast is dominated by the north-eastern monsoon, which blows from November to March, resulting in slower seasons in the months compared to other months throughout the year. At this time, heavy rain and the sea around the islands will be turbulent, and consequently the islands will be difficult to access by boat.

There are numerous studies on the development of island tourism that has been conducted both outside and within the country. Among the studies conducted abroad are on Caribbean islands (McElroy and de Albuquerque, 1998) as well as Pacific islands (Milme and Nowosielski, 1997). Meanwhile, researchers who have been studying the development of island tourism in Malaysia include Yussof, Omar and Saat (2007), Abdul Manaf, Samsuddin and Omar (2011), Ibrahim (2007), Abas and Mohd Hanafiah (2014). In the Malaysian context, island tourism development studies are mostly carried out on Langkawi Island, Kedah with focus on business perspectives (Othman and Rosli, 2011), environmental impact (Marzuki, 2008; Shamsiry et al, 2012), community development (Marzuki, 2008, Marzuki and Khoo, 2016), community socio-cultural (Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh and Ismail, 2015), as well as tourism planning (Marzuki, 2008). However, research on the involvement of local entrepreneurs in Tioman Island has not been given much attention by academicians as well as by the industry. To fill the gap, this study will emphasize on the involvement of local tourism operators in Tioman Island. Among the objectives of this study are:

- a) To identify the characteristics of island communities involved as tour operators.
- b) Analyse the problems and challenges faced by island tourism operators.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 The Concept of Entrepreneurship**

Based on the summary of the development of Entrepreneurship Theory described by Ab. Latif (2011), entrepreneurs are individuals whose position is between suppliers and consumers. The definition of entrepreneur changes into a person who is willing to bear the risk of profit and loss resulting from contract with the government at a fixed price in the 17th century. Bula (2012) states that entrepreneurs are risk-bearers, coordinators and organizers, gap-fillers, leaders, and innovators or creative imitator. Based on Bula's review (2012), some researchers consider entrepreneurship from an economic perspective, sociology and psychology as well as from a management perspective.

Komppula (2014) assess entrepreneurship as a new venture and small business development that contributes to the development of a destination by creating competition, collaboration, specialization, innovation, investment, risk taking and productivity. Entrepreneurship and the establishment of new transactions are crucial for creating and maintaining a healthy economy as it creates new job opportunities, enhances the country's export capability and economic growth as well as contributes to economic sustainability.

## ***2.2 Community Involvement in the Tourism Sector***

Tosun (2000) defines community involvement as a form of voluntary action in which the community takes the opportunity and assumes social responsibility. Chapman and Kirk (2001) consider community involvement as an important part of the regeneration process and create a strong, sustained and united community and highlight the community's voices in the decision-making process and this statement is also supported by Aref and Gill (2010).

According to Timothy (1999), by participating in tourism development activities, community local will ensure that their aspirations are taken into account as well as enhancing their understanding of the project. This means that community involvement is a process whereby communities are given the opportunity to work together with the responsible parties to control the development and use of local resources that will ultimately affect their own standard of living (Buhalis and Molinaroli, 2003; Fons, Fierro and Patino, 2011; Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996; Lordkipanidze, 2002).

## ***2.3 Problems and Challenges of Local Tourism Operators***

Stone and Stone (2011) identified that lack of funds and financial resources was a main problem in the business and this statement also supported by previous researchers such as (Aref and Redzuan, 2009; Bagherifard, Jalali, Khalili, Sharifi and Somayyeh, 2013; Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004; Janoszka and Copera, 2014; Okech, Haghiti and George, 2012; Iorio and Corsale, 2010). The problem is that the financial resources owned by the local community are very limited especially for those residing in rural areas due to their isolated location and difficulties in obtaining financial loans. According to Tosun (2000), lack of resources can prevent the community from obtaining training to manage their business and will further restrict the involvement of local communities in the tourism development process and this statement is supported by (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2004; Sharpley and Forster, 2003).

Furthermore, the location of the island which is far from the mainland is also a major problem for tourism entrepreneurs. According to Sheldon, Knox and Lowry (2005), island tourism entrepreneurs usually face problems related to geography and topography due to its isolated location and away from the mainland. A survey conducted by Siemens (2005) found that business activities in remote areas faced challenges such as lack of paved roads and limited access to banking services, electricity and business infrastructure. According to the Pacific Island Centre (2013) report, the location of remote islands is also a problem in terms of communication, human interaction and transport costs.

Another obstacle is related to the marketing of tourism products provided by the rural community (Braun, 2008). This situation will be worse if the rural community does not have the information and communications technology. According to Dixey (2005), lack of market information can limit the process of innovation as well as industry and community capabilities. The difficulty of gaining access to information and communication technology facilities will prevent foreign tourists from getting

information about the location and if there is such information, foreign tourists will be difficult to make reservations or get additional information that can help them make a decision.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Data Collection**

This study uses quantitative methods involving 200 respondents comprising local entrepreneurs involved in tourism entrepreneurship using purposive sampling procedures and snowballs and both sampling methods are also used by Jones (2016), Park and Kim (2014) and Yodsuwan (2010) in studies related to the tourism sector.

In this study, objective sampling was conducted by selecting respondents based on certain characteristics such as over 18 years old, premises owners, local entrepreneurs and running companies involved in the tourism sector. In this study, purposive sampling will be done by selecting respondents based on certain characteristics such as over 18 years old, the owner of the premises or enterprise, a local entrepreneur (not a foreign entrepreneur), and conducting a business engaged in the tourism sector. For snowball sampling, respondents were asked to suggest other respondents who also had the same characteristics to answer this questionnaire. In this study, the analysis used was the frequency distribution, percentage and factor analysis.

#### **3.2 Questionnaire Form**

At this stage, the researcher will collect the data by using a questionnaire on the sample of the study which is the local tourism operators in Tioman Island. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section contains questions related to respondent profile information, while the second part includes questions related to problems and challenges faced by local tourism entrepreneurs.

### **4. Study Area**

Tioman Island is one of the island's most famous tourist destinations in the East Coast of Peninsular Malaysia with many marine resources and indeed targeted for tourism development. The island is one of the 10 most beautiful islands in the world and has been gazetted as one of Malaysia's Marine Parks.

In terms of location, Tioman Island is located in the state of Pahang and is the largest island in the clusters of nine islands (Tioman Island, Tulai Island, Labas Island, Sepoi Island, Seri Buat Island, Tokong Bahara Island, Gut Island, Cebeh Island and Sembilang Island) that form the Tioman Island Marine Park. Tioman Island Located approximately 32 nautical miles east of Tanjung Gemuk, Pahang, and it was gazetted as a Marine Park in 1994 under the Fisheries Act 1985 (Amendment 1993). In addition, five other islands, Renggis Island, Tumok Island, Soyak Island, Tasu Island and Raja Island, are also included within the boundaries of the park (Department of Marine Park Malaysia, 2017).

In Tioman Island, there are nine villages namely Kampung Tekek, Kampung Salang, Kampung Air Batang, Kampung Paya, Kampung Mukut, Kampung Nipah, Kampung Genting, Kampung Juara and Kampung Asah. All these villages are located at west of Tioman Island except Kampung Juara (Figure 1).



Fig. 1 Location map of Tioman island

Sources: Department of Marine Park Malaysia (2017)

#### 4.1 Tourist Arrivals Statistics

The tourist arrivals in Tioman Island for 2015 are 231,238 peoples. This total consists of 164,027 domestic tourists (70.9%) and 67,211 peoples (29.1%) of international tourists. According to the Tioman Development Authority Report (2015), the largest international tourists are from Singapore, followed by Germany, France, Britain and India. In the current year, tourist arrivals dropped by 37,546 tourists compared to 2014. The statistics of tourist arrivals in the last five (5) years are showed in Table 1.

**Table 1** Tourist arrivals to Terengganu 2008-2013

Year	Tourist arrivals	Domestic tourist	International tourist
2011	212680	121660	91020
2012	214482	146587	67895
2013	232102	163103	70466
2014	268784	191795	76989
2015	231238	164027	67211

Sources: Tioman development authority (2015)

The increase in tourist arrivals statistics to Tioman Island can be associated with the efforts of the government, especially Tioman Development Authority (TDA) in promoting the island as a tourist destination. Among the efforts undertaken by the TDA are by developing a tourism information system. Through the system, all information such as resorts, scuba centres and transportation services will be updated and the web surfers will have the opportunity to share information about community activities and tourism programs. In terms of advertising, the TDA has also taken the initiative to buy advertising space within Malaysia's Visitor's Guide to ensure that information related to Tioman Island can be delivered easily and quickly. The travel guide displays information such as phone numbers, maps, latest photos, chalets and diving centres that available in Tioman Island.

## **5. Analysis and Discussion**

### **5.1 Demographic Profile**

The respondents' profile summary is shown in Table 2. The findings show that community involvement as tour operators is monopolised by male (185 or 92.5%), while female account for 15 or 7.5%. This study supports the study conducted by Ahmad (2005) and Sharma (2013), but in contrast to the study of Getz and Carlsen (2000) as well as Getz and Petersen (2005). In this study, greater involvement of male is due to the influence of cultural traditions in which male have more advantages than female in the field of enterprise, as well as of the role of male as family leaders and decision-makers. Meanwhile, female's engagement was seen as less prominent in the island's tourism entrepreneurship due to lack of confidence in running the business and this statement was supported by Raposo, Paco and Ferreira (2008).

In addition, most respondents involved as local tourism entrepreneurs in Tioman Island are 100% Malay. In terms of age, most (106 or 53%) of local tourism operators are in the age range of 25 to 44 years old. 64 or 32% of respondents aged 45 to 54 years, followed by 21 or 10.5% of respondents aged 55 to 64 years old. The results of this study support the study of Avcikurt (2003) and Levesque and Minniti (2006) which states that most employers age is in the mid and adult age category of 25 to 50.

In terms of education level, the majority (126 or 63%) of respondents completed education at secondary school level, 53 or 26.5% primary school, while 4 or 2% had certificate / diploma. However, there were 17 or 8.5% of respondents who did not receive any education. Based on some opinions from respondents, they stated that they were not interested in continuing to a higher level because they were more concerned with business experience than higher education levels and this study supported the study of Morrison and Teixeira (2004). In addition, Lerner and Haber (2001) studies also found that high levels of education did not contribute to performance in the tourism sector business.

In terms of marital status, most of the respondents (181 or 90.5%) were married compared to (8 or 4%) of widowed statuses, 5 persons or 2.5% widower and 6 or 3% were single. The results of this study support the study of Banki and Ismail (2015) and Jaafar, Dahalan and Mohd Rosdi (2014) which found most tour operators comprised those who have been married. According to Adegbite, Ilori, Irefin, Abereijo and Aderemi (2006), married entrepreneurs are found to work harder in managing their business than those in the 'divorce' status because they are influenced by their responsibilities and commitments to their families.

## 5.2 Business Profile

In terms of the types of tourism business activities, the majority (55 or 27.5%) of the respondents involved in the food and beverage business, followed by 34 or 17% of the respondents engaged in boat service business, 25 or 12.5% engaged in chalet/ resort accommodation business, 21 or 10.5% of respondents operating a grocery store, 18 or 9% operating a boat service and equipment activities of water, 14 and 7% involved in business rental of vehicles (motorcycles and bicycles), 12 or 6% manage

**Table 2** Profile of respondents

Variable	Criteria	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Male	185	92.5
	Female	15	7.5
	25-44	106	53.0
	45-54	64	32.0
	55-64	21	10.5
	65 and above	9	4.5
	No formal education	17	8.5
	Primary school	53	26.5
	Secondary school	126	63.0
	Diploma certificate	4	2.0
	Single	6	3.0
	Married	181	90.5
	Widow	8	4.0
	widower	5	2.5
	Tourist boat	34	17
	Accommodation-chalet / resort	25	12.5
	Souvenir	12	6
	Boat service and water activities equipment	18	9
	Food / beverage shop	55	27.5
	Tour van drivers	7	3.5
	Grocery store	21	10.5
	Travel agent	8	4.0
	Massage services	2	1.0
	Draws pattern of batik	1	.5
	Vehicle rental (motorcycles and bicycles)	14	7.0
	Laundry Shop	3	1.5
	5 years and below	15	7.5
	6 - 10 years	56	28.0
	11 - 15 years	58	29.0
	16 - 20 years	36	18.0
	21 - 25 years	13	6.5
	26 years and above	22	11.0
	RM1000 and below	23	11.5
	RM1001 - RM2000	69	34.5
	RM2001 - RM4000	72	36.0
	RM4001 - RM5000	6	3.0
	RM5001 and above	30	15.0

souvenir shop, 8 or 4% of the respondent are tourism agents, 3 or 1.5% opened a laundry shop and the rest was one person or 0.5% worked on the business of drawing *batik* pattern.

Most respondents (58 or 29%) run their business operations for 11-15 years, followed by (56 or 28%) of respondents who run business operations for 6-10 years. There are also (22 or 11%) respondents who worked on their business for over 26 years in Tioman Island.

In terms of monthly income, most (72 or 36%) respondents earn monthly income of RM2001 - RM4000, followed by (69 or 34.5%) respondents who earn monthly income of RM1001 - RM2000. There are also 30 or 15% of the respondents who earn a monthly income of RM5001 and above and 23 or 11.5% of respondents receiving monthly income of RM1000 and below. This shows that the involvement of local communities in tourism entrepreneurship can contribute to poverty reduction and the findings are supported by the study (Akunaay, Nelson and Singleton, 2003; Ashe, 2005; Fons et al., 2011; Goodwin and Santilli, 2009; Magigi and Ramadhani, 2013; Zaei and Zaei, 2013; Lordkipanidze et al., 2005; Surugiu, 2009).

### 5.3 Problems and Challenges in the Business

In this section, factor analysis is used to analyse the problems and challenges faced by local tourism operators consisting of 20 items. Table 3 shows the results of the KMO test is 0.863. Whereas, the Bartlett's test shows a significant value where  $p = 0.000$  is smaller than the significant level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) ( $\chi^2 = 5993.556$ ,  $df = 190$ ,  $sig\ p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3** KMO test and Bartlett's test variables problem of local operators

KMO and Bartlett's Test	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.863
Approx. Chi-Square	7508.218
df	190
Sig.	0.000

The factor analysis result in Table 4 show that the variables of local tourism entrepreneur's problems were grouped into 4 main factors and this was shown by the eigenvalues where there were 4 eigenvalues greater than 1. The eigenvalues of Factor 1 is 6.49, for Factor 2 is 5.13, Factor 3 is 4.18 and Factor 4 is 2.34. All four factors contributed 90.78% of the variance as a whole. The percentage variance obtained for Factor 1 is 32.48%, Factor 2 is 25.66%, Factor 3 is 20.91%, and Factor 4 is 11.72%.

**Table 4** Eigen value and percentage variance of local tourism entrepreneurs' problems

Komponen	Jumlah Varians yang Diterangkan		
	Nilai Eigen Permulaan	Varians (%)	Kumulatif (%)
Faktor 1	6.496	32.482	32.482
Faktor 2	5.134	25.668	58.150
Faktor 3	4.182	20.910	79.060
Faktor 4	2.344	11.722	90.782

Extraction method: principal component analysis



After varimax rotation was done on 20 variables of local entrepreneurial problems, 4 factors had been extracted. Factor 1 consists of 6 items, Factor 2 is 6 items, Factor 3 is 5 items and Factor 4 is 3 items. Based on the results of the factor analysis that has been carried out, 4 main factors have been labelled as follows: Factor 1 (capital and financial) Factor 2 (marketing problem), Factor 3 (business management problem) and Factor 4 (infrastructure problem) as shown in Table 5.

This result support the study of Bagherifard et al., (2013), Janoszka and Copera (2014) and Okech et al. (2012) finds that capital and financial problems are the major problem faced by entrepreneurs in the tourism sector. The problem is that the financial resources owned by the local community are very limited especially for those residing in rural areas due to its remote location and the lack of financial leverage. In addition, the problem is also due to the difficulty in obtaining a loan as there are certain conditions and procedures that need to be met before making a loan from a loan agency. There are also respondents who claim that they do not want to be bound by debt and 'interest' problems that may not be refundable.

**Table 5** Factor analysis for the problem variables of local tourism operators

Rotated Component Matrix	Factor			
	1	2	3	4
<b>Factor 1: Capital and Financial</b>				
Lack of knowledge how to apply for financial loans from financial institutions	0.984			
The government is giving less financial support to small premises	0.978			
Problems getting loans or capital	0.972			
Too many procedures in the process of loan applications	0.970			
Lack of capital resources	0.968			
Problem of the high 'interest'	0.955			
<b>Factor 2: Marketing</b>				
Less promotion of business		0.945		
Challenging competition		0.905		
Lack of skillful in organizational management and administration		0.903		
Not understanding the market well		0.902		
Lack of skillful in identifying, assessing and solving problems		0.899		
Communication problems with tourists		0.868		
<b>Factor 3: Business Management Problem</b>				
Lack of knowledge in using information technology (IT)			0.956	
Lack of training scheme to tour operators			0.951	
Lack of management and knowledge skills in tourism			0.939	
Problem getting advice about business			0.937	
Lack of knowledge on sales and marketing techniques			0.924	
<b>Factor 4: Infrastructure Problem</b>				
Location of premises far away from the tourist attraction				0.975
There are no premises and sufficient retail space				0.973
Expensive transportation costs from mainland				0.970
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>

In terms of marketing problems, the results of this study support the study of Dixey (2005). According to the researcher, the lack of market information will limit the innovation and capabilities of the tourism industry. Furthermore, the problems in managing the business are also among the problems and challenges in the enterprise and this study also supports the study of Aref and Redzuan (2009) and Janoszka and Kopera (2014). According to Braun (2008), most entrepreneurs are less likely to receive basic information and knowledge about business and marketing. This can be attributed to the lack of participation in entrepreneurship courses and the lack of education in the field of tourism business. The last problem is the infrastructure problem. A survey conducted by Siemens (2005) found that business activities in remote areas faced challenges such as lack of paved roads and limited access to banking, electricity and business infrastructure. According to the Pacific Island Center (2013) report, the location of remote islands is also a problem in terms of communication, human interaction and transport costs.

## **6. Conclusion**

The study concludes that most local tour operators in Tioman Island manage food and beverage businesses as there is a high demand from tourists who come to enjoy local foods. In addition, most entrepreneurs carry on businesses for a period of 11 to 15 years despite having to face competition from outside entrepreneurs with higher skills and capital. In terms of monthly income, most operators receive a revenue of RM2001 to RM4000 and this suggests that the tourism sector is able to contribute to the opportunities of workers and generate income to the local community.

In the community's efforts to run a company, they also face some problems and challenges. Local tourism operators also face problems and challenges in carrying out their businesses such as capital and financial problems, marketing problems, business management problems and structural problems. Therefore, the parties involved, such as the government and financial agencies, should consider and review the eligibility requirements to facilitate entrepreneurs to make financial loans. Additionally, authorities like governments, NGOs and private companies should constantly monitor the performance of local operators as well as organize more courses to provide knowledge and enhance the knowledge and skills of entrepreneurs in all business-related tourism. In addition, aspects of facilities and infrastructure need to be taken into account in every development undertaken so that each community and tourists can enjoy the facilities provided perfectly. It is important to ensure the improvement in the influx of tourists to Tioman Island as it contributes to the socio-economic development of the local community involved and to improve the well-being of the local community. This study proposes comprehensive research on issues and problems to be done by the state and federal governments. Assistance should be given to real entrepreneurs who have great potential to influence economic prosperity.

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