

The Impact of Accessibility Quality and Accommodation Quality on Tourists' Satisfaction and Revisit Intention to Rural Tourism Destination in Sarawak: The Moderating Role of Local Communities' Attitude

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Abstract

Purpose: Past studies have proven that there is an increasing trend showing more tourists are travelling to rural areas for vacation because of its richness of the local natural, cultural, and heritage resources. Despite the potential importance of rural tourism, however there has been an ongoing debate on ways to better develop rural tourism destinations that will ensure sustainable of profitability. Service quality has been proposed as one of the crucial determinants to enhance tourists' satisfaction and subsequently lead to revisit intention. Therefore, this study intends to examine the influence of two service quality components, namely accessibility quality and accommodation quality and its impacts towards tourists' satisfaction and subsequently leads to revisit intention. This study also examines the moderating role of local communities' attitude in enhancing the relationship among the two namely service quality components on tourists' satisfaction.

Design/methodology/approach: A total of 251 tourists volunteered participated in this study. The SmartPLS (version 3.2.6) is used to perform the PLS-SEM analysis via two steps approach.

Findings: The results found that both accessibility quality and accommodation quality was positively related to tourists' satisfaction, and tourists' satisfaction was found positive relations with revisit intention. Interestingly, local communities' attitude was found enhanced the relationship between accommodation quality and tourists' satisfaction.

Research limitations/implications: The findings have made some contributions to the literature in rural tourism areas and enriches the existing knowledge of service quality components and their effect on tourists' satisfaction from the demand side perspectives.

Practical implications: The findings could serve as a practical guideline to tourism practitioners to plan and develop rural tourism destinations with the valuable information gather from tourists' perspectives, specifically to enhance the quality of accessibility and accommodation quality in rural destinations to better satisfy tourists' needs.

Originality/value: This study is perhaps the first known study to examine the impact of local communities' attitude in moderating the relationship among service quality's components and tourists' satisfaction.

Keywords: Accessibility Quality, Accommodation Quality, Satisfaction, Revisit Intention, Local Communities' Attitude, Tourists, PLS-SEM, Sarawak

Introduction

The rural tourism sector has shown a remarkably growth over the decades and its potential contributions to country's economic growth, and as well as enhancing local community's standard of living are signified (Nair & Azmi, 2008; Aliman, Hashim, Wahid, & Harudin, 2016). Past studies have proven that there is an increasing trend showing more tourists are travelling to rural areas for vacation because of its richness of the local natural, cultural, and heritage resources (Huh, 2002). The changing trends of travelling by tourists have created a new market segment for the tourism industry. The Ministry of Tourism in Malaysia has started to give their focus on rural tourism development since years ago with implementing numbers of initiatives for rural tourism development (Razzaq, Hadi, Mustafa, Hamzah, Khalifah, and Mohamad, 2011). One of the plans is through Homestay Program to promote community-based activities and rural tourism development.

Despite the potential importance of rural tourism, however there has been an ongoing debate on ways to better develop rural tourism destinations that will ensure sustainable of profitability (Chang, 2013; Kwok, Jusoh, and Khalifah, 2016). Campón-Cerro, Hernández-Mogollón, and Alves (2016) have propounded that it is important for rural tourism entrepreneurs to fulfill tourists' needs for sustainability of profitability especially in the current stiff competition among the rural tourism destinations. Therefore, service quality has been proposed as one of the crucial determinants to enhance tourists' satisfaction and subsequently lead to revisit intention for long-lasting profitability in the industry (Kumra, 2008; EL-refae, 2012; Ismail, Hanafiah, Aimuddin, and Mustafa, 2016). The nature of rural tourism development took place at rural destinations where local community as the permanent residents. Hence, past studies have also suggested that it is crucial to examine local communities' attitudes towards tourists (Hanafiah, Jamaluddin, & Zulkifly, 2013; Abas and Hanafiah, 2014) because of its potential to influence tourists' behavioral intention to revisit (Reitsamer, Brunner-Sperdin, and Stockburger-Sauer, 2016).

Hence, this study intends to investigate two of the components of service quality, namely accessibility quality and accommodation quality and its impacts on tourists' satisfaction, and subsequently the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and revisit intention is also examine. Furthermore, this is the first known study to integrate local communities' attitudes as a moderator to testify its moderating relationship among the proposed constructs from the tourists' point of view.