



LOCAL COMMUNITIES' PERCEPTIONS ON RURAL TOURISM COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: A STUDY ON KAMPUNG BAKO (BAKO NATIONAL PARK), KUCHING, SARAWAK



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ABSTRACT

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Rural tourism in Malaysia has been designated as a potential segment to give a boost to the tourism industry in further up the value chain; it is also a natural and ready-made vehicle for the rural community to develop their local area economically and infrastructurally. The development of tourism destination, however, should own a capacity in maximising the competitive advantage to be effective and yet sustainable. This study examines the perspective of local community on the relationship between economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts on tourism, stakeholder involvement, and community tourism knowledge with rural competitive advantage. 150 residents of a rural tourism destination in Sarawak, Malaysia voluntarily took part in this study. SmartPLS 2.0 (M3) was applied, to assess the developed model, based on path modelling. Subsequently, to generate the standard error of the estimate and t-values, bootstrapping with 500 re-samples was applied. The findings suggested that stakeholder's involvement in tourism, community support for tourism, and economic impact of tourism have had a significant positive impact on rural competitive advantage; community knowledge of tourism and environmental and socio-cultural impacts of tourism, did not have a significant impact on the same. The implications arising from these findings are then been further discussed.

Contribution/ Originality: This study is one of the very few studies which have investigated the tri-dimensional constructs of tourism impacts, community knowledge and support, and as well as stakeholder involvement for the development of rural tourism competitive advantage in a single framework and was conducted in developing countries in Asia, specifically Sarawak, Malaysia.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism in Malaysia is a fast-growing segment that received governmental attention at the federal level. To be precise, this tourism segmentation has been given more attention at the state (Sarawak) level, by the fact that Sarawak's tourist attractions are located mostly outside the urban area. In fact, the Sarawak Ministry of Tourism is encouraging all rural community to participate themselves into tourism industry via home-stay programmes and community-based ecotourism activities; such programmes involve proper registration (which implies regulation is implemented) and skills training to ensure the maintenance of quality and standards of service ([Towards More](#)