

Tourscape: A systematic approach towards a sustainable rural tourism management

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Abstract. Tourism plays an important role in the Malaysian economy as it is considered to be one of the corner stones of the country's economy. The purpose of this research is to conduct an analysis based on the existing tourism industry in rural tourism destinations in Malaysia by examining the impact of economics, environmental, social and cultural factors of the tourism industry on the local communities in Malaysia. 516 respondents comprising of tourism stakeholders from 34 rural tourism sites in Malaysia took part voluntarily in this study. To assess the developed model, SmartPLS 2.0 (M3) was applied based on path modeling and then bootstrapping with 200 re-samples was applied to generate the standard error of the estimate and t-values. Subsequently, a system named *Tourscape* was designed to manage the information. This system can be considered as a benchmark for tourism industry stakeholders as it is able to display the current situational analysis and the tourism health of selected tourism destination sites by capturing data and information, not only from local communities but industry players and tourists as well. The findings from this study revealed that the cooperation from various stakeholders has created significant impact on the development of rural tourism.

1. Introduction

Rural tourism has evolved significantly since the last decade and it is known as one of the vital source of income to increase the standard of living of the rural communities. Rural tourism plays an important role in bringing in foreign exchange, improve on the economic standing and provide employment opportunities to the local communities. Past studies have evidenced that tourism is a potential industry that can improve on the socio-development of the countries; nonetheless it would not be made possible without the participation and support from the tourism stakeholders [1-4]. Nonetheless, development projects are often designed and implemented in which indigenous people have minimal voice in its policy and management. Hence, partnerships between the stakeholders such as the tourism industry players, government agencies and local communities are needed to promote the socio-economic development of the rural tourism industry. The Malaysian government had started its initiatives in promoting the tourism industry since 1987 [5] and today tourism industry is one of the cornerstone of Malaysia's economic diversification strategy.

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