


Self-efficacy and sustainable rural tourism development: local communities' perspectives from Kuching, Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

The future of the tourism industry is dependent on local communities' ability to develop and sustain tourism developments, especially in sensitive rural areas. But there is limited research on this topic to guide tourism authorities and governments. In particular, few studies have studied sustainable rural tourism development from the perspective of the local communities. Therefore, this study examines local communities' views on their capability to achieve sustainable rural tourism development in selected rural areas in Kuching, Sarawak. Questionnaires were distributed to the local communities residing at three rural tourism destinations in Kuching, Sarawak. Interestingly, the results indicated that local communities' self-efficacy has a positive relationship with social, cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability. Hence, this study offers theoretical and practical contributions to sustainable rural tourism development literature and the tourism industry.

KEYWORDS

Self-efficacy; social sustainability; cultural sustainability; economic sustainability; environmental sustainability

Introduction

Rural tourism is an important industry that contributes to the preservation of national heritage, culture, and has been recognized as a diversification strategy to improve the rural economy in remote areas (Milenković & Utvić, 2013; Rid, Ezeudji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014). In Malaysia, the Ministry of Tourism is actively promoting homestay programs under the Rural Tourism Master Plan. This plan encourages local communities to participate in rural tourism development and improve their standard of living (Lo, Songan, Mohamad, & Ye, 2013). Furthermore, in the state of Sarawak, the tourism board promotes and advertises its rural tourism destinations (Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, 2015) and in 2014 launched *Visit Sarawak Year 2014*, which promotes the state's culture, adventure, and nature (Emaria, Zahari, & Nur-Adilah, 2014; Sanggin, 2009). However, rural tourism may negatively impact the social,

cultural, economic, and environmental aspects in rural tourism destinations (Ko & Stewart, 2002). Tourism authorities who focus on the economic benefits has led to unplanned and uncontrolled tourism development. Consequently, this led to environmental degradation (Loumou, Giourga, Dimitrakopoulos, & Koukoulas, 2000) and a social-economic imbalance among the local communities where profits were not equitably distributed and shared (Coomansingh, 2004; Tooman, 1997). Therefore, sustainability in rural tourism has been greatly emphasized in the tourism industry (Fiorello & Bo, 2012).

Sustainable rural tourism development aims to develop appropriate policies and strategies that benefit the local communities while limiting its negative impacts (Ertuna & Kirbas, 2012). Previous research has highlighted that sustainable rural tourism development improves local residents' quality of life by optimizing local resources, conserving the natural