

ASSESSMENT OF ECOTOURISM MANAGEMENT AND SERVICES IN MOUNT KINABALU NATIONAL PARKS OF SABAH



The Mount Kinabalu National Park is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the South East Asian region. Like other protected areas of the world, the management of the national park is intricately linked to ecotourism. Yet the management of national parks in Malaysia is directly under the responsibility of the State and has been viewed by some people as a drain of public funds and revenue earned from other sectors of the economy. Thus, the need to assess the contribution of national parks and ecotourism activities to the overall tourism revenue and economy was necessary. This study was conducted at the Mt. Kinabalu National Park involving key respondents such as visitors to the park, local business operators, employees of the Park and local people living near the park. The main objective of the study was to assess the ecotourism management and services at the Mt. Kinabalu National Park. The findings of the study revealed that ecotourism activities in the national park have contributed positively to the socio-economic well-being of the local community and at the same time found to have very little negative impact on the natural environment. The conservation management strategies implemented in the park was found to be effective. This is largely attributed to the effectiveness of the enforcement division of the Sabah Park in enforcing the Parks Enactment which governs and controls the park. However, there are potential threats to the integrity of the national park. These threats arise from native rights to land, and agriculture and climate change. Human-induced changes can also lead to both environmental and social conditions that visitors find unacceptable or inappropriate. Visitors, nevertheless, expressed a lot of satisfaction with their visits to the park as their expectations are met.

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