

# Minority community participation in tourism development: A case of Malacca

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## Abstract

The continuous development of tourism sectors world widely not only for the purpose to sustain the traditional resources but expanding the contemporary tourism products and cultural values. The combination of these two elements directly boosts up the economy of the country, situational contexts, and the local communities. Tourism development besides others is closely associated with communal efforts of all parties. Recognition of the tourism destinations could not be achieved by solidly depends on the government initiatives alone without the participation of the private sectors, industry players, NGO's and the local communities. The involvement or participation of the community in tourism development is crucial in ensuring the development is meeting the economy and social objectives. This research note discusses the community capacity building toward state tourism development.

## Keywords:

Participation, minority, ethnic group, tourism developments

## 1 Introduction

The continuous development of tourism sectors world widely not only for the purpose to sustain the traditional resources but expanding the contemporary tourism products and cultural values (UNWTO, 2008). The combination of these two elements directly boosts up the economy of the country, situational contexts, and the local communities. In this sense, tourism development is closely associated with communal efforts of all parties. According to Vourc'h (2003), recognition of the tourism destinations could not be achieved by solidly depend on the government initiatives alone without the participation of the private sectors, industry players, NGO's and the local communities.

With regard to the local communities, their involvement significantly contributes to the development of the tourism industry. Feighery (2002) states that the key successful element in tourism development, tourism planning, and other aspects concerning tourism destination, without doubt, depending broadly on community support. Similarly, to achieve sustainable tourism, there is always in need of support from the host community (STCRC, 2010). An approach called Community-based Tourism (CBT) was being introduced and practices in many third worlds, developing and developed countries in accelerating of the tourism industry. Hitchens and Highstead (2005) reported that areas that successfully practiced of CBT are usually in the prime areas that have good proximity in establishing tourism accessibility, links to the private sector as well as local communities although in many instances the Community-based Tourism (CBT) was not successfully achieved due to the limited involvement of the community in the main tourism development process (Cooper, 2004). Therefore, it is crucial for any tourism destination to allow the engagement of their local communities towards tourism development.

Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC) (2010) argue that the best way to recognize a destination is by identifying the communities itself because they are part of host destination and familiar with the resources of destination that can be used as the tourism products. On the other hand, the participation of the local community in tourism destination through community capacity buildings cannot be ignored as this could contribute to a significant tourism development. This research note is therefore conceptually discussing the relationship between community participation and state tourism development and relates the issue to the researcher proposed study.

## **2 Community participation toward tourism development**

Community participation is concerned on the involvement of individuals and communities in decision making that may affect their lives (Burns et al., n.d). The community participation is also known as the mechanism for active community involvement in partnership working, decision making and representation in community structures (Chapman & Kirk, 2001). Phillips & Pittman (2008) came out with a model that relates to how the community participation in tourism development contributes to the whole progress of the outcome of the development or they called tourism development chain.

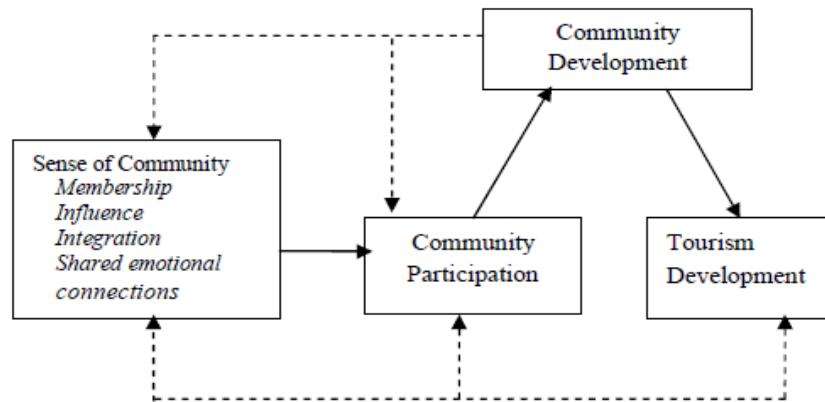


Figure 1: Tourism Development Chain (Phillips & Pittman, 2008)

This model explains the relationship how the sense of community which comprises the attributes (membership, influence, integration, shared emotional, connections) contribute to community participation and development and at the end lead tourism development. Aref et al. (2010) suggested that sense of community as one of the traits on their study on the concept and dimensions of community capacity building on tourism development. The parties involved in this development such as community leaders, stakeholders, and tourism development practitioners should encourage the concept of the sense of community as to improve and allow community participation.

This relationship has also proven by Aref (2011) as he adapted the model to investigate the relationship between the sense of community and level of participation in tourism development in Shiraz, Iran. This is because the elements of the sense of community are a motivation for the participation of the tourism activities of the destination. The findings resulted that there is a significant relationship between the community participation and sense of community in the tourism development.

In contrast, even though it is being urged that the local communities participate in the tourism development, but studies revealed that some dimensions limit the participation of local community's tourism development. According to Tosun (2000), there are three main dimensions of limitations for the participation of local communities in developing countries towards tourism development which are classified as (1) Operational Limitations (2) Structural Limitations and (3) Cultural Limitations. Under the operational level include (a) centralization of public administration of tourism, (b) lack of coordination, and (c) lack of information. As for the structural limitations include (a) attitudes of professionals (b) lack of expertise (c) elite domination (d) lack of appropriate legal system (e) lack of trained human resources (f) relatively high cost of community participation and lack of financial resources. The last dimension is cultural limitations consisting of (a) limited capacity of poor people and (b) apathy and low level of awareness in the local community.

Tosun (2000) explained the lack of participation of the local communities is not a simple matter, but it involves different ideological beliefs, political forces, administrative arrangements and re-distribution of wealth as well as power in developing countries. Dukeshire & Thurlow (2002) identified the barriers and challenges that may hinder the progress of the tourism development in the rural Canada areas which contribute to the government further understanding towards this issue. Seven of the reasons found were (1) Lack of understanding of the policy process which allows the individual's empowerment and community-based organizations to make decisions, (2) Lack of community resources which relate to funding, government training programs, education, leaders, and volunteers to support rural causes and initiatives.

### **3 Minority group community participation in Malacca state tourism development**

Known by their developed trading cultural exchanges between east and west for over the past 500 years (UNESCO, 2008), Melaka is one of the oldest heritage cities. Owing to many tourism products ranging from traditional heritage to modern products Melaka is increasingly receiving a substantial number of local and international tourists' arrival. In 2012 alone, more than four million tourists are reported of visiting Melaka with China, Singapore tourists in the top notches follow by Indonesia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, European and Middle Eastern countries (Syahrin, 2012).

In hastening the tourism development, the state government through the department of tourism also actively encourages the participation of NGOs, international organizations, private agencies, tourism suppliers, tourism private sectors and the local communities (NEAC, 2010). The collaborations between all of these tourism key players have resulted in many profitable and constructive tourist attractions. Many opportunities for the development of tourism allow the partnership between the key players, especially with local communities. Participation of the local communities with the state tourism can be seen through the selling of handicrafts, homestay, food and traditional costumes and others in many tourism spots in the state (Fernandis, 2003). In fact, the state head minister stated that the multiracial of the local communities in Melaka could create a positive force in the tourism development.

Despite the urging from the government, the participation of certain minority ethnic groups in Melaka tourism especially among the Baba Nyonya and Portuguese is slightly slow compared to Malays, Chinese and Indian. For instance, record from the Melaka tourism department revealed the participation of these two minority ethnic groups is not aggressive (Melaka State Tourism, 2012). This scenario is receiving a greater concern to state tourism department and public as these two minority ethnics have long been part of Melaka heritage. This issue raises critical questions as to why less participation among the ethnic minority groups and what are the underlying reasons of this causation. In another word, are these problems related to lack of community capacity building among those ethnic groups? In this sense, community

capacity building is related to the support of communities in developing their skills and knowledge as to allow them to work together and give positive change within their communities (Department for Social development, n.d). The community capacity building consists of the influence by the community's commitment, resources and skills that build the community strengths and address on the community problems and opportunities (Aspen Institute, 1996). Therefore, it is worth to investigate and revealed the causation which the empirical investigation is still undertaking.

#### **4 Conclusion**

The study on Baba Nyonya and Portuguese community capacity building is believed to have significantly influenced towards the tourism development of the state. From the academic perspective, this study will create new body literature in Malaysia as well as expanding the existing body of literature existed. Consequently, this research will contribute in adding knowledge to the future researcher to further explore in various areas in Malaysia for the benefit of tourism Malaysia. In practical perspective, the findings will help the government, especially the Melaka State Ministry of Tourism and other non-government related agencies. The result of the research will also help the industry provider in making improvements and also give information to come out with a guideline for future planning.

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