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ABSTRACT

The tourism industry on Langkawi and Redang islands has played an important role in improving the well-being of the islands’ community. This study aims to investigate the contribution of the tourism sector towards the well-being of the islanders through multiple indicators of well-being; employment, expenditure and ownership. Qualitative methods were employed to look at the changes of the islanders well-being over 10 years, after the year 2001. Both islands had been declared tourism destinations in the 1980’s. Several techniques were used to get data; Focus Group Discussion (FGD); Interviews; and observation. The results showed there was a clear improvement in the well-being of people on both islands, especially in terms of employment, income and expenses. All respondents acknowledged that their well-being has changed after getting a lot of job opportunities on the islands. Of the 30 respondents in Langkawi, most of them admitted that they have better income. From the aspect of spending, all respondents spent enough for their families and themselves. Ownership of the respondents on Langkawi island has also changed due to the increased income and expenses. Analysis from the FGD session on Redang island showed that most of the informants admitted an increase in jobs in the tourism sector enhanced the level of community’s well-being. As on Langkawi Island, employment, expenditure and ownership for the islanders on Redang Island also increased. The increasing jobs in the tourism industry on Langkawi and Redang Island enhance the level of spending and ownership, thus enhance the well-being of the community on both tourism islands.

Key words: Langkawi Island, Redang Island, Well-being, Island Community

Introduction

Tourism is regarded as an important sector to the Malaysian economy. It is reported that tourism has brought in almost RM30 billion income to the Inland Revenue Department. The first achievement prior to the tourism industry was in 1990. Malaysians have seen changes and development with regards to the tourism industry throughout Malaysia. Many of the projects had been approved by the authorities in a hasty manner, without proper research and consideration as well as using data without proper approval.

The tourism industry is the second largest contributor after the manufacturing sector in the Malaysia’s economy. In 2008, Malaysia recorded 22.05 million tourists arrivals to a variety of tourism destinations throughout Malaysia and gained RM49.6 billion (USD 13.4 billion) in revenue. The homestay program, for example, is one of the tourism products that has been given priority by local governments through the Ministry of Tourism. Realizing the potential of the homestay program, the Rural Tourism Master Plan of 2001 was formulated to promote homestay programs as a catalyst for rural community development. In the 9th Malaysian Plan (2006-2010), one of the main objectives the government focused on was community development, thus rural tourism is one of the mechanisms used to achieve this objective (Yahaya Ibrahim et al. (2008).

Tourism has brought a number of impacts towards the local economy, environment and society, providing employment and business opportunities to its communities including on Langkawi and Redang islands. The existence of career opportunities in one tourism destination is highly dependent on the inflow of tourists and the amount of money spent on the destination. There are a variety of jobs offered in the tourism industry, namely as shown in Table 1 below:
Table 1: Type of Jobs in the Tourism Industry on Langkawi Island.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation (Hotels and Resorts)</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Airline companies</td>
<td>- Janitor</td>
<td>- Tourism Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House keeper</td>
<td>Bus companies</td>
<td>- Waiter/Waitress</td>
<td>Consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>Shipping companies</td>
<td>- Receptionist</td>
<td>Tourist guides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Waiter/Waitress</td>
<td>Entrepreneural railway companies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Janitor</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receptionist</td>
<td>- Tourism Agencies</td>
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Community participation is crucial not only in terms of workforce which will affect the economical returns but it will also have the potential to bring new income and capital (revenues) needed to local communities. Such new income and capital could help supply or replace traditional revenue sources of the local communities. The development of the tourism industry, according to Yahaya Ibrahim (2008), often receives support from the government while the local residents are well aware of its benefits.

Background of Langkawi Island:

Langkawi Island is located in the north Peninsular Malaysia and is one of the districts in the state of Kedah. This island is located in the Northwest of Peninsular Malaysia with a latitude of $6^\circ$ 10' North to $6^\circ$ 30' and longitude $99^\circ$ 35' East to $100^\circ$ East. There are 99 small islands around Langkawi Island, mostly uninhabited. The islands are surrounded by the Andaman Sea and the Straits of Malacca. Langkawi Island is said to be the largest island among other islands in the conglomeration archipelago with an area of 32,000 hectares (Faizal A. Hamid 2005).

Data issued by the Langkawi District Office shows that the number of residents on the island have increased and in 2010, its inhabitants reached as many as 155,262 people (http://www.pdllangkawi.blogspot.com).

Langkawi Island has been experiencing changes, particularly in terms of its development and tourism industry. Langkawi Island became a ‘Tax-Free Island,’ in 1987 and was well developed over the years after its declaration to be the city of tourism in 2001. This tourism island is also listed as one of the Geoparks known worldwide.

On Langkawi Island, the enhancement of the islanders’ well-being is the most significant impact from the tourism developments. Almost all of the respondents agreed that their well-being has increased as compared to 10 years ago.

Background of Redang Island:

Redang Island is located in the South China Sea, namely in the district of Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia. It is located within 30 nautical miles from Kuala Terengganu and 20 nautical miles from the Merang beach – as its main base on the mainland. A trip to Redang Island from Merang with a speed boat or tourist boat takes in between 45 minutes to 1½ hours depending on the speed, tidal currents and weather. If tourists take a ferry from the Shah Bandar Jetty, Kuala Terengganu, it takes 2 to 2 ½ hours journey.

The total land area of the Redang Island archipelago is 2,672.5 hectares while the main island itself is about 1,087 hectares, with an approximate diameter north-south and east-west of 5 km each. In general, its topography is divided into two, namely 70 percent of the hills in the east and another in the west; both separated by a valley that stretches from Teluk Dalam to the outfall of Redang in the south. The Redang archipelago is comprised of many other islands namely Redang Island as the main land with its population, and other islands which includes Pinang Island, Ling Island, Kerengea Besar Island, Kerengea Kecil Island, Ekor Tebu Island, Paku Besar Island, Paku Kecil Island and Lima Island. All of these islands, unlike Redang Island, are uninhabited.

The cluster of small islands near to Redang Island offers Malaysia attractive coral reefs, known to be among the best in the world. The shores of Redang Island are listed as one of the Malaysian Marine Parks; offering a vast variety of coral reefs and colorful fish that attracts tourists from all over the world.

Redang Island is part of the municipality of the sea, particularly the area of productive coral reefs and is filled with flora and fauna. These seas serve as the origin for breeding several kinds of high-value fish. Pulau Redang Marine Park Centre was established in 1990 and is located on Pinang Island. It serves as the center of administration and management and has many facilities such as exhibition halls, laboratories and Marine Aquarium. The main goal of creating marine parks is to maintain beautiful views of nature and protect it from the effects of development, to improve and maintain the habitat of marine life which is increasingly threatened, creating a specific area in order to maintain the beauty of flora and fauna, research and education as well as to
create a recreational area for people without prejudice to its natural condition. With continued tourism in Redang Island, the well-being of its people is not ignored.

On Redang Island, 75 percent of its local communities are employed in the tourism industry; a majority of them are among the younger generation, 10% government servants, 10% self-employed and the remaining 5% are local traditional fishermen where most of them are from the older generations. The 10 percent who work as government servants are those who work as clerks, security guards, gardeners, teachers and those who are employed in the Department of Fisheries. Another 8% are those who are self-employed, where according to Norizan (2011), those who are self-employed either work as labours, carpenters or work with their relatives or friends.

Literature Review:

According to Pazim Othman (2011), the tourism industry has become an important sector in both developed and developing countries, including Malaysia. Acknowledging the positive advantages of tourism, much research has been carried out on small business in the tourism industry. However, the direct impact of tourism on business performance is totally ignored. A study on the impact of tourism on small business performance operating on four main tourist destination islands in Malaysia found that tourism is measured by tourist arrivals and tourists customers have a significant positive impact on the financial and non-financial performance of the small businesses. This finding consolidates tourism development theory that tourism is an important catalyst for entrepreneurial development and small business performance. It also justifies the government’s efforts in promoting and developing the tourism industry in general and island tourism in particular.

The article ‘Does Employment In The Tourism Industry Affect The Quality Of Life? A Case Study on Redang and Perhentian Islands, Terengganu, Malaysia,’ showed the percentage and pattern of employment on both islands are quite similar. In Redang Island, 80 percent were employed with the remaining 20 percent unemployed. A total of 75 percent of the employed are involved in the tourism industry, 10 percent are government servants, 10 percent self-employed and the remaining 5 percent are traditional fishermen (Norizan, 2011).

Abdul Rasid Abdul Razzaq et al. (2011), in an article ‘Local Community Participation in Homestay Program Development in Malaysia’ mentioned that the tourism industry is the second largest economic contributor in Malaysia, following the manufacturing sector. In 2008, recorded tourist arrivals reached 22.05 million and resulted in RM49.6 billion (USD13.4 billion) in revenue. The government has recognized the tourism industry in Malaysia as an engine for economic, social, political and ecological development, especially in rural areas. The Homestay Program is actively promoted by the Ministry of Tourism as a type of community based tourism in Malaysia. It is realized by the government as a catalyst for rural community development, particularly from a socio-economic perspective. The benefits of community based tourism can be further developed through the participation of women, youth and retired people. To realize the potential of the Homestay Program, the Malaysian Rural Tourism Master Plan 2001 was formulated. In the Malaysian Plan (2006-2010), one of the points of focus by the government was on community development with rural tourism as one of the mechanisms. By June 2009, there were 3,264 participants in 140 Homestays. Recently, the Ministry of Tourism has given the Homestay Program special emphasis. Under the 9th Malaysia Plan, a total of RM40 million was allocated to the ministry for upgrading infrastructure and facilities in participating villages.

Developing the capabilities of local communities is an important component in ensuring tourism development project benefits them; without supporting the communities in their endeavors, the physical development means nothing to them. If local communities are not equipped to actively participate, third parties could easily manipulate them, resulting in external domination of tourism development. Therefore, this descriptive study explores the motivation of local communities involved in the Homestay Program and the readiness among the local communities, as well as the appropriateness of training provided by government agencies aimed towards empowering local communities. Sixty-two respondents from local communities actively involved in operating the Homestay Program participated in this study. Respondents were from the district of Muar, Johore, Malaysia.

Research titled ‘Impacts of Tourism Development in Langkawi Island, Malaysia: A Qualitative Approach,’ by Azizan Marzuki (2008) was also undertaken where the researcher attempted to track the progress of tourism development on the island between 1986 and 2004. Despite the massive amount of money spent on the development of tourism in Malaysia, no study had been conducted in relation to tourism and its impact towards the local economy and socio-culture. The case study was conducted from March to July 2004 and the main focus was to explore and identify the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts of tourism in Langkawi Island. Forty semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders involving hotel managers, government and non-government organization representatives, resort and tourism developers and community leaders were conducted and analyzed using Ritchie and Spencer’s Framework Method. Two key issues were identified and further discussed, which includes: (1) the benefits of tourism development, and (2) the costs of
tourism development. The analysis also found that despite the limitation and development issues arising from the tourism sector, its benefits in Langkawi far outweighed the costs accrued to the local populace.

Joshua B. Fisher et al. (2008), in ‘Balancing Water, Religion and Tourism on Redang Island, Malaysia’ states that Redang Island (Pulau Redang) is part of a Marine Park, an archipelago of coral and thousands of kinds of fish and invertebrates. The relatively isolated local community is generally centered on fishing, and Islam guides daily life. Recently, the tourism industry has expanded on the island. New hotels and resorts provide jobs, but also expose the locals to western culture and touristic behavior, which may clash with deeply traditional community values. Further, the tourism industry may be putting a strain on the natural resources, especially the quantity and quality of freshwater. The island village may become divided between those who support the tourism industry and those who do not. This study presented an exploratory investigation into the development-environment-culture dynamics of tourism, water and religion on Redang Island while building collaboration between universities of this Muslim state and the West.

Badaruddin Mohamed et al. (2008) reviewed tourism development in major islands in Malaysia, namely Langkawi, Pangkor, Tioman and Redang and evaluated real and perceived physical impacts of tourism development. The review was based on a perception survey of the people living and working on the four islands. The results showed that while welcoming more tourists and more tourism development, the islanders complain of higher general prices, the depletion of greenery, increased urbanization and many other issues. Many of these impacts are irreversible. The islanders, however, do not have any other option but to carry on with their lives. The author suggests that in order to sustain the island environment, the carrying capacity of the island must be set and respected.

Yahaya Ibrahim (2007) discusses on the participation of local communities on three islands in Malaysia namely Redang Island, Perhentian Island and Tioman Island, which are in the midst of a tourism development process. According to him, for a community living on a small island which is a late-comer to development, oftentimes its members will face problems adapting to the process. As a result, issues were raised pertaining to whether they were marginalized by the industry or had marginalized themselves because they were unable to cope with the demands of development. The impacts of the tourism sector towards the community who basically share similar background with different level of capabilities as well as different notions of development is portrayed through their actions, participation and achievement in the locals’ socio-economy and entrepreneurship.

Objective:

This study aims to investigate the contribution of the tourism sector on the well-being of the islanders on Langkawi and Redang Island through multiple indicators of well-being; employment, expenditure and ownership.

Methodology:

This study was a survey and a qualitative methodology was employed to look at the changes of the islanders’ well-being over a 10 year period from 2001 to 2011. Several techniques were used in the data collection procedures namely through; Focus Group Discussion (FGD), interviews and observation. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted on Redang Island. Members of the FGD included the head of the village, chalet operators, government employees and workers in the tourism industry. The focus group session took an average time of two hours. This was supported by a series of interviews with the aid of some key informants. However, in Langkawi, semi-structured interviews were employed with 30 respondents (R) consisting of head of the village, hawkers, chalet owners as well as the community members.

Findings:

Employment Enhances the Community’s Well-being on Langkawi and Redang Islands:

The development of the tourism sector helps increase job opportunities in other services. Every dollar spent by the tourists will be a source of income to the local community.

The highest percentage for the distribution of work is in the field of business/services with a total percentage of 32.2 percent (Langkawi District Office, 2012). Observations indicate that the involvement of local communities in business and services is widely open. The construction of hotels and chalets is today growing to meet the number of tourists to Langkawi Island.

Job opportunities keep increasing over the years due to tourism development and if locals could benefit by such developments, it will be a leverage for them to improve their socio-economic family status and others.In the northern part of Langkawi Island, the Dalai Bay (area overlooking the Teratau Island owned by Thailand)
has been developed as a recreation and accommodation centre, where most of the area is forest reserve. The development of this recreational park and accommodation centre has provided working opportunities where most of the locals are working in the tourism and service sector as well as in the tourism sector alone (Muhammad Najit Sukemi et al., 2008).

One of the respondents on Langkawi Island (R6) who works at a clothing store used to be unemployed, living as a housewife, but now working with her own income. According to R6, her husband, a former fisherman is now working as a boatman. This shows that tourism and development bring changes to locals’ socio-economic status as well as improve their family’s well-being.

It is through this earned income that the respondents are possible to incur expenses. There are also a few other respondents who work in order to pay their children’s school fees up to the higher levels. According to one of the respondents who engaged in the transportation services;

“I support my children’s school fees with the income I made…we never received any loans or scholarships throughout schools…but he/she did receive loans during diploma and bachelor’s degree…I still need to support my child though - since he/she is studying away from home.” (R15, Male).

This shows that, vast opportunities for higher educational standards are offered to the local community as well, where everyone has equal opportunity to pursue their studies to a higher level due to their family’s income and financial stability. When compared to the previous years, most had to quit school because their parents could no longer afford to pay the student fees. What’s more disappointing is when there are also a few who did not get the chance to go to school, even primary school.

The number of business entrepreneurs who use small trucks to sell food, also known as ‘street hawkers’ have also been increasing over the years, especially in areas near the beaches. There are a variety of food sold namely laksa, sticky rice cendol, noodle soup, rojak and many more with a variety of drinks. These business entrepreneurs start operating their business at 3pm and end during dusk. These businesses will be vigorous during the holiday season because not only locals are visiting the island, there will also be tourists from all over the world. The main attraction bringing customers to these entrepreneurial business spots is the tranquil scenery overlooking the blue ocean waters.

There are also a few souvenir shops open almost everywhere. Various kinds of souvenirs are sold and this gains a high demand from the tourists – souvenirs to be bought as a personal souvenir or gifts for friends.

The type of employment in the tourism industry are direct jobs; such as direct selling and providing goods and services to the tourists such as hotels, restaurants, transportation and grocery shops. Indirect jobs are activities initiated by the expenditure of tourists (money spent by the tourists), such as manufacturing and supplying goods and services to entrepreneurs for the tourists, and investment-related jobs such as construction and capital goods industry (Mohamad Sulong 1990).

One of the female respondents – R20, a 60 year old who had lost her husband (husband passed away) and had an adopted daughter with physical disability (OKU) said that;

“It would be difficult for me to work elsewhere…it is not that easy to leave home… But Alhamdulillah (Thanks be to Allah) there are working opportunities offered here… Weaving small bags, small containers and much more using the same weave materials when weaving the mats.” (R20).

Communities should take whatever initiative and grab any possible opportunities so that the emerging opportunities do not fall to the hand of outsiders because if such a scenario happens, it would be a loss to the local community. Islam itself encourages Muslims to be involved in businesses, as mentioned in the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): “Nine out of 10 sources of income come from business activities” (hadith narrated by al-Tirmizi).

**Employment in Tourism Sector on Redang Island:**

On Redang Island, development is primarily focused on the tourism industry more than on the improvement of the community's well being. The development of the tourism industry has opened vast employment opportunities that has given a new lease on life for the locals. However, 95 percent of the employment opportunities in the tourism industry involve working as low-level workforce such as boatmen, cooks, cleaners, cashiers and receptionists. However, these jobs are what has enabled the youth of the island to increase their household incomes, thus increasing the QoL and well-being of the communities (Norizan, 2011).

One of the local residents, 52 years of age, owns a resort with 13 rooms as part of his business partnership with his family. His total monthly income averages RM4,000. He is no stranger to the tourism industry however, being one of the supervisors on a Golf Resort here since the 80's with a monthly income of RM800. He then worked as a boatman. As a reward for his efforts in the past, he now owns three tourist vans and could afford his own house. He also employs a total of 10 workers. Even then he still admits that he is still trying hard to escalate his business in the industry.
The increasing numbers of local entrepreneurs on Redang island is clear. Many general goods stores and food stalls can be seen around the island especially near major tourist spots. The tourists in turn prefer to spend money there since the price the locals offer is lower compared to restaurants or cafes at the major resorts.

Further observations indicate that there are still a lot of employment opportunities in the tourism industry on the island. Local residents who own boats have the opportunity to lend their boats to tourists from March until September each year, during the peak tourism season.

However, there is no doubt that almost all Redang islanders who are involved in the tourism industry work in entry level positions like boatmen, tourist guides, clerks, receptionists, cook etc.

Expenditure/Expenses:

In the aspect of expenditure, the overall respondents involved with the tourism industry in Langkawi and Redang Islands were satisfied with the expenses they made out of the monthly revenue they earn today. There are also some comparisons made between the expenditure of today with 10 years earlier.

“My current income today is better than before…back when I was a cook in the hotel. This means that my spending is also getting better. Especially because I love business and entrepreneurship, my income and spending is improving.” (R7)

“My husband and I used to work in the paddy fields, owned by neighbours or friends… and then we became rubber tappers… but now that we own our very own shop… Alhamdulillah (Thanks be to Allah).” (R11)

“…I’ve been working in so many different fields of work before… before the development; I worked as a clerk in a hotel… driving a coach and also worked as a waiter.” (R15)

The Redang islanders’ spending or expenses pattern is similar to each other in relation to their children’s needs which also includes educational fees. They also spend their salary on water and electricity bills as well as transportation to the mainland.

The islanders’ spending was quite limited 10 years ago, but today their purchasing power has been improving and such a situation definitely brings pleasure to them. Most of the children are now working and support themselves as well as help increase the household income.

Expenses on Redang Island are quite high. A male representative from the island, explains that the cost of general goods on the island is quite expensive compared to that of the mainland. He said, "A 10kg pack of rice is priced at RM32 on the mainland compared to RM36 on the island. My opinion however, it is better to buy them on the island to save the trouble of transportation time and fees.”

A women representative of Redang Island commented about the increased expenses needed nowadays. RM50 nowadays is only enough for just one visit to the grocery store. The problem escalates further with the increase of the petrol price. "Imagine that a shredded coconut costs at RM2.70, which is the basic cooking ingredient. The price on the mainland is only RM1.50, which is cheaper”, she said.

Every single informant agreed to the fact that due to the high price of basic goods, people are a bit burdened. However, this does not affect the well-being or quality of life of the residents here.

We can fairly say that the average expenses for the islanders of Redang would be on a medium level. The value is around RM20-RM30 of daily expenses per household. Interviews conducted indicated that the variety of jobs on these islands also had given a significant impact on the well-being of the islanders. The spending attitude of the communities also contributed to the improvement of the business sector on these islands. People's dependency to the state government for incentives and such are inappropriate due to the vast job opportunities here. Ultimately, it is up to the locals to decide what is best for them. Those who work hard will surely earn and those who don’t will miss out on opportunities that are readily available for the taking (Norizan, 2011).

Ownership:

On Langkawi and Redang Island, all of the informants agreed that the quality of their well-being has been improving over the years, especially in the last 10 years. All the boats, automobiles, houses and furniture that they own are the result of their incomes earned from jobs in the tourism industry.

Regarding ownership of assets, most of the respondents in Langkawi Island have assets of particular importance for everyday use. Although there are a number of islanders who do not own a car, they still own motorcycles bought using the income they earned in the tourism industry. There are also those who own additional assets such as cars, motorcycles and perfect home appliances, especially after 10 years being involved in the tourism industry. This improves the islanders’ well-being.

Respondents on Redang Island confess they have prioritised their assets; a house of their own; needs for the house (gas stove, refrigerator, electric fan, washing machine, TV, radio) and motorcycles. Unlike those in Langkawi Island, Redang islanders often buy goods and groceries on the mainland. Langkawi islanders do not need to buy their needs outside of Langkawi because everything is available on the island. Residents of Redang
Island, on the other hand, need to come up with their own budget for transportation fares to buy what they need in the mainland.

Summary and Conclusion:

The percentage and pattern of employment on Langkawi and Redang Island are quite similar. On Redang Island, 80 percent of the islanders are employed and 75 percent of them are involved in the tourism industry. However, a matter to be aware is that although the tourism industry has been providing jobs for the residents on both islands, most of these jobs are that of low level employment with an average income of RM450 per month.

The involvement of both island communities in the tourism industry has led to the improvement of their well-being. The FGD and focused interviews, clarifies their employment, expenses and ownership perspective. Although some respondents express a few difficulties that they may encounter, a majority of them agreed that the vast employment opportunities brought by the tourism industry had somehow improved their quality of life over the past 10 years and has made their life happier.

It is also clear that employment in the tourism industry has helped the community on both islands to improve their well-being. The vast amount of employment opportunities provided by the industry is one of the important sources of income for the islanders. It is true that employment is influencing household income, thus increasing the well-being on both islands. Despite the low level of their savings, the islanders are still enjoying their life on both islands. Furthermore, most of the islanders concluded that although the high price of basic goods are a bit of a burden to them, this does not effect their well-being.

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