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Sustainable rural tourism: An indigenous community perspective on positioning rural tourism

Abstract

It is commonly assumed that formulation of tourism policies and the marketing of destination areas are dictated by the needs and interests of visitors. Often ignored however, are the views of the local communities, the roles they play in these processes as well as the impacts on the indigenous communities and their socio-cultural spaces. Thus this paper presents a study conducted with the indigenous community of Long Lamai in Malaysia, who has recently ventured into rural tourism. The Long Lamai community has slowly transformed from being solely dependent on hunting gathering to leveraging on their rich natural sources for a cash income as well as opening up to the outside world. The local community perceives tourism as the best option to sustain and align their lifestyle to their new needs. However as a remote community, they are also aware of the vulnerabilities due to the rapid development plans which may bring about adverse effects to their present healthy existence. The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to assess the local community's support for tourism development; and (2) to explore the perceived positioning of rural tourism by local people. Results showed that the majority of community members have strong support for tourism development and they are also ready to face possible challenges that come with this development. Major concerns expressed by community members include environmental conservation and local cultural protocols.

Key words: indigenous community; positioning; rural tourism; perspective; Long Lamai; Malaysia

Introduction

Rural tourism is the fastest growing business, which increase foreign investments and earnings (Daneshpour & Pajouh, 2014). It is regarded as one of the few activities that can benefit local communities without much expenditure and increase earnings by sustainably utilising local resources in making local products (Othman, Sazali & Mohamed, 2013). It boosts the rural economy and, in particular, provides opportunities for rural communities to directly benefit from tourism by creating a value-added commercial channel for local produce (Sgroi, Trapani, Testa & Tudisca, 2014). For indigenous peoples, the threat to their environment and culture is huge and currently there is limited effort to protect the communities, their land and environment from negative impacts of development changes. Tourism provides an opportunity for indigenous peoples to promote their sustainable lifestyle and also to earn cash income (McCool & Moisey, 2001). Nonetheless, as Scheyvens (1999) argues: 'Ecotourism ventures should only be considered successful if local communities have some measure of control over them and if they share equitably in the benefits emerging from ecotourism activities'. According to the World Tourism Organisation: 'The development of sustainable tourism requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building' (UNWTO, 2005).

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In today's tourism industry, there is increasing competition to attract more international and domestic tourists (Chon, Uysal, Fesenmaier & O'Leary, 2014). The strategies for positioning rural tourism destinations have overlooked local and community's perspectives and paid more attention to outsider's and tourists' perspectives. Positioning is defined as an activity of creating a brand offer in such a manner that it occupies a distinctive place and value in the target customer's mind (Li & Zhang, 2011). The traditional way of positioning a product is mainly focused on two factors, product attributes (as perceived by the strategy planners) and consumer expectations and their perceptions (Lhotáková & Klosová, 2009). The development of tourist attractions, the formulation of tourism policies, and the marketing of destination areas are mostly dictated by the needs and interests of the visitors. In the process of positioning rural tourism products, the role and perspective of local community and tourism actors are often ignored. Liu (2006) argued that ignoring local perspective results in lack of interest by local communities, the loss of local culture and dissatisfied residents and tourists. This leads to often unsustainable and unoriginal tourism services failing to harness the local communities' diversity, uniqueness and commitment. It might be expected that the local community's perceived image for positioning of their home as a rural tourism destination is more important because, for tourists, the appeal of rural areas lies mainly in heritage, nature, culture, local knowledge and most importantly natural hospitality of the local people (Rid, Ezeuduji & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014). With this challenge in mind, this study has been conducted in a Penan village, Long Lamai located in upper Baram, Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo. Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) has involved with the Long Lamai community in a long term research and development project since 2008. The local community and partnering organisations planned to develop the sustainable eco-tourism services in the village as a strategy for socio-economic development.

In the next section we first present a literature review on related concepts and work, followed by the research context. We then describe the methodology, as well as results, and conclude with the discussion and conclusion.

Rural tourism and indigenous communities

Tourism in indigenous homelands have a competitive tourism advantage based on their unique cultures (Notzke, 2004), the natural spirit of hospitality (McIntosh, Hinch & Ingram, 2002) and increasingly valuable traditional land (Stevens, 1997). Indigenous homelands are the most attractive and successful tourism destinations, due to their exotic nature and sustainable use of resources and protection of their natural environment (Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013). Tourism supports the preservation of cultural heritage and environment and achieves economic independence for local communities. Nonetheless, tourism carries the risk of contributing to cultural and environmental degradation (Butler & Hinch, 2010). The majority of tourism activities are tourist-oriented and, in efforts to satisfy tourists' demands it has been noted that many resources (e.g. cultural character) are sacrificed. A balanced approach to rural tourism development strategy can be envisioned through the inclusion of local perspectives. This understanding can be helpful in minimizing the negative impact of external factors which are mostly due to lack of awareness (Butler & Hinch, 2010). Indigenous tourism destinations also help to increase visitor's understanding and appreciation for the preservation of culture, knowledge and the environment. It decreases the gap between urban and rural communities. As economic independence is one of the primary motivations for indigenous people to be involved in tourism, it also gives them support to sustain and keep their cultural life and natural environment alive and protected (Butler & Hinch, 2010). However current benefit sharing models often fail to deliver desired outcome for indigenous

communities, that, for many tourism policy management remains an external activity (Brockington, Duffy & Igoe, 2008; Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013). Ross, Grant, Robinson, Izurieta, Smyth and Rist (2009) suggests the delivery of practical and locally meaningful benefits and ownership to control the tourism activities.

Theoretical framework

Destination positioning

The concept of positioning is rooted in private sector marketing and is applicable to a company, service person or place and this is in tandem with the concept of a product, which can be defined as physical goods, service, place, person or idea (Chew, 2009; Trout & Ries, 2000). A 'positioning' strategy relates the brand attributes to particular target segments. The main concern behind an acute need strategy is to guarantee the continued presence of the brand in the consumers' consideration set, keeping a good position in top-of-the-mind awareness (Brito & Pratas, 2015). In tourism, destination image refers to how a place is represented. The destination image plays an important role in influencing tourists' choices in visiting the destination (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002). According to Beerli and Martin (2004), the changes in the tourism sector, the intensifying competition, changes in tourist's behavior and expectation would affect the positioning strategy. There are multiple stakeholders involved in tourism development; hence the development of successful rural tourism programme is dependent on fulfilling the objectives of all stakeholders in the system. The inter-relationships among the stakeholders must be fully identified since each stakeholder's needs may be different from the others. A considerable amount of literature has been published on positioning of tourism destinations. Yet, few have addressed the issues of destination positioning analysis and the role of affective participation of local community (Lo, Mohamad, Songan & Yeo, 2012). Much of these studies have focused on tourist's perspective and little focus on local community's perspective.

Community's perspective

Mollahosseini and Karbasi (2012) defines 'perspective' as a complicated state of emotions, desires, beliefs, prejudices and tendencies which make some sort of acceptance and readiness in person's behavior due to his/her various experiences. To achieve successful sustainable tourism development, tourism officials and developers need to view tourism as a community industry. One of the core elements of tourism development is to encourage local communities' participation in positioning tourism destination as it is central to the sustainability of tourism industry. The community's active involvement and participation in rural tourism business will have positive effect on their quality of life and their support towards tourism development (Johari, Ramachandran, Shuib & Herman, 2015; Woo, Kim & Uysal, 2015). However, before a community begins to develop tourism activities, understanding residents' perspective about tourism and their perceived image of tourism destination is important to get their support for future development. While the literature suggests a number of roles which local communities could take in tourism development, little emphasis has so far been given as to how local communities themselves feel about this. As a result, there has been little evidence, especially from the grassroots, on what communities really think of their role(s) and impacts of tourism development in their locality. This study explores the perspective of Penans of Long Lamai, through their motivation to participate in tourism, their attachment to their community, their involvement in tourism planning and activities and their readiness for the tourism and tourists.

Social exchange theory

According to Carrillo and Pérez (2015), the structural configuration of a rural tourism product is so complex that it includes both tangible (financial) and intangible (social and cultural) benefits coupled with the interaction between community and tourist-client. Hence, various researchers have used Social Exchange Theory (SET) to analyse tourists and residents' perspective and attitudes toward tourism development (Choo & Petrick, 2014; Sharpley, 2014; Woo et al., 2015). SET can be described as 'a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation' (Ap, 1992). According to this theory, people are likely to benefit from exchange of rewards and costs to calculate the values of outcomes from different situations. Such exchanges could be material, social, or psychological. In tourism context, if the host residents perceive that tourism development would incur more costs than benefits, they are likely to oppose this development (Gursoy et al., 2002). SET covers three aspects, economic, environmental, and sociocultural, that can assist in determining how residents will respond to future tourism development across vital aspects of a community (Gursoy, Chi & Dyer, 2010; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). From a tourism standpoint, SET proposes that an individual's attitudes toward tourism development will be influenced by assessing the resulting outcomes in the community and for tourism to occur in a community, there must be an exchanges between community and other stakeholders (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). According to Styliadis, Biran, Sit and Szivas (2014), more favourable perception of these (economic, environmental, and sociocultural) impacts lead to greater support by the community for tourism.

Economic growth is considered one of the main reasons why rural communities choose to go for tourism as an alternative income without leaving their own villages. Tourism researchers have viewed the relationship between resident attitudes and economic dependency from various perspectives, and have argued that local residents have more positive attitude when they have benefited from the development (Harrill, 2004). However the current study intends to extend this fact and investigate local communities' perspective towards tourism based on the tangible and intangible exchange of resources between them and tourists. Such exchange is not limited to financial benefits but also other benefits like learning and acquiring knowledge of outside world from tourists coming from different backgrounds (Bratek, Devlin & Simmons, 2010; Liu, 2006; Woo et al., 2015). While Harrill (2004) argues that in all this exchange, economic benefit has long been of interest to predict community's attitude towards tourism. It assumes that community, receiving more benefit from tourism, will be having positive attitude towards tourist and tourism activities and in turn will perceive their area more favorable for tourism developments. The more they receive the benefit, the more positive perception they will have of their area, which is of great importance as it could influence the potential tourist to visit a destination (Schroeder, 1996). SET is more relevant to rural tourism because by definition this theory is concerned with the exchange of material or symbolic resources between people or groups of people; that is, it is relevant primarily to the analysis of implicitly voluntary exchange processes between two parties in this context, tourists and local people (Sharpley, 2014).

Malaysian indigenous rural tourism

According to the Eleventh Malaysia Plan, Malaysia continues to be one of the world's leading tourist destinations with an increase in tourist arrivals from 24.6 million in 2010 to 27.4 million in 2014. Tourism remained an important source of foreign exchange earnings at RM72 billion in 2014, an increase of 27.4% from RM56.5 billion in 2010 (EPU, 2015). To enhance the distinct appeal of Malaysian tourism products and services, the Government continued to promote the country's traditional

advantages such as cultural and natural heritage which enhanced the popularity of destinations such as Melaka, Pulau Pinang and Sabah and Sarawak. The government has developed and diversified many new tourism products, and one of the efforts is to introduce community-based home-stay accommodation tourism. The concept of Homestay is when a tourist stays together with the host family and interacts with the local community for a reasonable charge. The homestay programme in Malaysia is gradually evolving into a mainstream tourism product that is being aggressively promoted by the government as a form of catalyst for revitalising the rural economy. The homestay programme was enhanced to increase participation of the rural population in tourism-related activities as well as provide rural households opportunities to supplement their incomes. As a result of the Government's encouragement and intervention, by March 2014, a total of 3,486 homestay operators from 170 villages throughout the country have been trained and licensed by the Ministry of Tourism & Culture (MTPB, 2015). From January to November 2014, the homestay programme recorded 67,490 international participants, an increase of 10.5% compared to the same period in 2013 (MTPB, 2015). In 2013, Sarawak has a total of 28 homestays in 32 villages with 419 operators, offering a total of 549 rooms provided is either in the form of individual traditional houses or longhouses (Salleh et al., 2014). Till April, 2016 the number of homestays increased to 35 as described in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1
Number of registered homestay in Sarawak

Division	No. of homestays
Miri	6
Limbang	3
Kota Samarahan	1
Serian	3
Seri Aman	1
Betong	1
Sarikei	1
Sibu	2
Kapit	1
Mukah	2
Kuching	14
Total	35

To create a competitive edge for Malaysia's rural tourism industry and to convey its attractiveness to the target market, there is a strong need to manage the resources in such a way that economic and social needs can be fulfilled by including all stakeholders including local community while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems as defined a sustainable tourism by WTO (1998) (Berno & Bricker, 2001). Many studies on tourism have demonstrated that tourists and tourism industry players are the major contributors to positioning a destination in tourism industry. Past researchers have elucidated the main challenge faced by Malaysia tourism industry is destination positioning (Johari, Ramachandran, Shuib & Herman, 2015). Considering the potential cascading effect that local communities can have on their destinations, previous research may have underestimated the impact of communities' power on destination positioning. Thus, in promoting tourism destination, positioning strategies to be used for the targeted areas should be emphasised on local community's concerns.

Research site - Long Lamai

Long Lamai is located in Sarawak near the border of Kalimantan, Indonesia. Travelling to the settlement from Miri takes eight hours on rough logging roads and an hour of hiking through the dense rain-forest. Alternately, it is reachable by flying from Miri to Long Banga by an hour's flight via a 19-seater Twin Otter and then taking a one-and-half hour boat ride to Long Lamai. There are approximately 598 Penans living in Long Lamai. Most of the local people (92%) are farmers. With exception of Irau Ajaú (harvesting festival), the community does not presently celebrate other cultural festivals. Penans are shy and gentle people, with a strong community bonding. They are egalitarian and do not follow any hierarchal structure of community leadership however, major community decisions are made by a consensus of the community elders supported by the village headman.

Tourism in Long Lamai

Tourism in Long Lamai is in its initial stages, where the community is registering their homestay with Malaysia Tourism Ministry and are not yet dependent on tourism as a major economic activity. The community in Long Lamai face socio-economic challenges due to the urban migration of their youths, and reduced opportunities for economic activities to improve their livelihood. The village elders and leadership see tourism as an ideal opportunity to upgrade the village socio-economic status. They know that tourism can bring many economic and social benefits. The community is aware of the associated challenges and that only controlled tourism can reduce the potential negative effects (Winschiers-Theophilus, Zaman & Yeo, 2015).

There are currently 6 homestays in the village and 4 are under construction. The families have allocated one room in their homes for visitors and tourists. The community has a boat owners' association. They practise sharing of economic benefits by taking their turns to provide services. The community also set the standard rates for their products and services such as travel packages, tour guides, boat services and homestay.

Penans initiatives for tourism development

The Penans have a small-scale community tourism programme. One of them is the Penan Peace Park. It is a proposal taken on by 18 Penan communities of the Upper Baram District and decided to manage their communal forest by adopting conservation concept (Wong, 2013). The Penan Peace Park is considered an instrument for economic and social development of the local communities. The proposal recommends two projects namely 'Development of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)' and 'Development of Community Based Tourism' as components for development of alternative income possibilities for the 18 Penan communities. On the development of the community based tourism, the Peace Park has already attracted some tourists especially forest adventurers and nature lovers based on homestay programme. Another community-based tourism initiative is the 'Picnic with the Penan' which is a sustainably-managed and community-run tourism programme specifically runs by the cooperative. In the initial stage, the programme features 5 Penan villages and offers tourism packages such as village Homestay, jungle trekking, forest food and flora and fauna knowledge.

Research methodology

The aim of the study was to collect and report on the community's perspective for designing better tourism products and services. We are aware that community members who are not directly involved in

tourism business are still affected by it so the informants of the study consist of community members both directly or indirectly involved in tourism business. This study also aims to bridge the communication gap between the internal tourism stakeholders such as the decision makers in the community (elders) and those who are directly involved in the tourism business such as homestay owners, handicraft makers and tour guides. This objective of describing community's perspective and interpretation thereof lends itself to an interview data collection method and a narrative thematic style of reporting.

Community engagements, reciprocity and ethical consideration

Before starting any research activity and to ensure meaningful local participation, the researcher met with the village headman and elders to explain the academic research objectives. The elders enquired about the expected outcome and benefits of the research to the community. The researcher committed to report the research findings and analysis back to the community. This will support the community elders and decision makers to make more informed decisions in planning for further tourism activities in their village. A local contact person was designated to the researcher to guide and assist in translation and interpretation. Although providing respondents with a financial incentive is quite common in many research domains, however, due to limited financial support, the researcher tried to look for other means to compensate the local guide and community members. For example, the community elders requested the researcher to organise a cooking class for the homestay owners so they can offer new food menus to their guests and tourists. The researcher organized a cooking session attended by 3 homestay operators, a guide and the village headman. Besides local capacity building the training also supported service improvements thus directly benefiting the future tourism activities in the community.

On the question, whether research findings and quotes should be anonymized, the community elders left the decision to the individual interviewees. All the interviewees agreed to report their perspective and quotations with their names, so that, future generations and readers remember them.

Interview data collection

The in-depth interviews of 22 residents took the form of open-ended discussion between the researcher and the interviewees, with the main focus on understanding the local's perspective on tourism. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, and recorded with permission of the interviewees. The interviews were mainly conducted in English and Penan language. An interpreter assisted with the questioning; a community representative. He is a fluent speaker of English and Penan language. The discussion was informal and free-ranging, and loosely followed specific questions.

Data sampling

A purposive expert sampling was undertaken. Expert sampling is well suited in process tracing because is not centered on the acquisition of statistical data to create a representative sample of the population to use as a basis of generalisation. The researcher asked community elders and representative to select the appropriate respondents for the current study so as to better explain the local perspective. Of the 22 respondents, 10 of them were male and 12 female (Table 2).

The majority (14 respondents) was aged less than 50 years old and none of the respondents were less than 20 year old. Ten of the interviewees are directly involved in tourism activities such as homestay owners, boat operators, handicraft makers and tour guides. The respondents included farmers, community elders and students who were not directly involved in tourism (Table 3).

Table 2

Gender and age composition

Gender	Male	10
	Female	12
Age	20-35	6
	36-50	8
	51-65	5
	66 and above	3

Table 3

Targeted groups

Tourism groups (directly involved)	Homestay
	Handicraft
	Boat owners
	Tourist guides
Others (indirectly involved)	House wives
	Private company employees
	Government employees
	Students
	Community elders
	Retired people
	Farmers

Some respondents belong to multiple groups for example a few women were operating their homestay business and they were also handicraft makers. The researchers also attended a meeting of the community handicraft makers to seek their willingness to participate in the research. All of the participants agreed to be a part of the study and showed their interest to promote Long Lamai as tourism destination.

Thematic analysis of the explored community perspectives

The majority of the respondents were firmly confident that tourism brings benefits to the community and they appreciate that tourism will be heightened in their village. In the following section, results of the interviews have been categorized in main themes exhibiting interviewee's perspective.

Tourism in nomadic life vs. today

Tourism is not a new concept for the community of Long Lamai. The elders mentioned that even in their nomadic life, they had carried out some tourism activities. On the history of tourism in Long Lamai, Tamen Pitta (90 years old, an elder of Long Lamai) shared that;

"Before the war [second world war] when we were still nomads, there was some sort of tourism present. During the colonial time, people usually come and visit us and it was an opportunity for us to sell them the collected products from forest. I still remember the first white man who visited us accompanied by an officer from Brunei"

At that time Penans were practising barter trading (in government organised trade meetings, called 'Tamu') and selling handicrafts to the neighbouring communities in exchange of goods such as salt, yards of black and red cloth which were cut to make loin cloths for the men and sarongs for the women, cooking utensils, bush knives (Langub, 2014). According to Tamen Pita, during the Second World War, the government stopped organising Tamu which made Penan's life harder. Slowly when

life settled after the war, they started again barter trading and visitors also started coming back to visit them. Comparing the tourism activities in nomadic life with the current tourism activities, Angut, wife of Taman Pita mentioned that;

"Compared to our old life, today's life is better. Back in old days we use to travel and chase the tourists to sell our handicraft but now we do not need to go anywhere, instead, tourists come to our village and bring money with them. To roam and carry all the things was a tough life"

Economic benefits, tourism and children's education

The Long Lamai community's lifestyle and needs changed after they stopped being nomadic. Their economic system changed rapidly from barter to cash and they are more dependent on cash income now. The community members see tourism as the most convenient way to earn cash income. According to Garen Jengan, a retired government servant and community representative;

"Tourism is an opportunity for us that we are waiting for a long time. It is a chance for us to upgrade our life. Before the telecentre (which started in 2008) in our village, most of the youngsters had gone to town for jobs and only old people left at the village. After the UNIMAS project, things started to change for Long Lamai. People started to make money from visits that were made by UNIMAS and other tourists. Before this we were having only 2 boats as we couldn't afford more. But today we have more than 40 boats and that is because of these tourism developments. Each of the boat is run by two people so approximately 50 to 80 families are earning money from this service. The local community's economic condition has been improved and the youngsters are coming back to village. If they work in town, their monthly earning would be approximately RM 800.00 (US\$267) and this is still not enough for urban life but here in village less than RM 800 is enough for them."

The community elders are supportive of tourism activities for many reasons, and foremost is the ultimate cash income that they can generate to support their children's education and healthcare. They also think that tourism will help to create job opportunities for local youth so they will not leave their village to seek jobs in the urban area. The local children complete their primary education in Long Lamai and for Secondary school they go to the nearby villages Bario, Long Sun or Marudi. For SPM (equivalent to O' level) or STPM (equivalent to GCE A level) they follow the public schooling system which is almost free. After SPM/STPM, only a few enter in public universities, so they have two choices either to return back to the village or look for a job in the nearest city Miri.

According to Balawan (a 54 year old school teacher), whose wife, Lydia (46 years old), running a homestay, explained that education is one of the main reasons that the families need to create means to earn cash so they can support the children living in town.

Ping Musa, 36, a mother of seven kids, said that after her husband lost his job as a watchman in the local school, she tries to make more handicrafts. The sale of handicrafts is a source of income that she needs for her children schooling and to fulfil other household expenses.

Cross-cultural encounters and learning

Another important aspect of the community motivation and perspective of tourism in Long Lamai is about the new knowledge and information flow from outside. The community is well aware about the imminent challenges attached with a changing lifestyle. Uda (70 years old), a community elder and assistant village headman said, *"In nomadic life we were like fish and the forest was our river. We were expert of forest life but after settlement many new challenges emerged and education, computers and*

tourism are the opportunities which help us to communicate with outside world and outsiders, so if we have any problem we can contact our well-wishers and ask their advice"

Balawan explained further about the unanticipated benefits of tourism; *"Besides earning money, our youngsters are excited to meet new people so that they can learn new knowledge from them"*.

Lydia has been running her homestay from the last Six years with her daughter-in-law Diana (23 years old). According to Diana, *"I don't want to go and work in town, I don't like the lifestyle in town. I want to stay in Long Lamai and want to develop my own homestay. I want tourism in Long Lamai because by this way I meet new people, from around the world and I get new knowledge and I speak English with them. By this way I can improve my language skills."*

Long Lamai's competitive tourist attractions

Long Lamai is an ideal place for nature and cultural tourism due to its rich heritage and the beautiful flora and fauna (Fig. 1). When asked what kind of tourism they would like in their village, all the respondents believed that Long Lamai has a huge potential for ecotourism. Two significant natural resources determine the villagers' daily life, the river Balong and the forest. Penans are strongly attached to their forest and they utilise it wisely (Winschiers-Theophilus, Zaman, Jensen, Rodil & Yeo, 2013). Being dependent on these natural resources, they have their own norms and regulations to govern their activities in the village and forest following principles of stewardship (molong) (Zaman & Wee, 2014). They want to promote Long Lamai as a 'healthy community' which is free of alcohol and tobacco, so neither the residents nor tourists are allowed to bring and use tobacco or alcohol to the village. They believe that in order to have a sustainable tourism programme, visitors need to respect and follow most of their cultural norms and rules (Winschiers-Theophilus et al., 2015). They keep their rivers clean and do not throw garbage into the river because they have historical sites for tourists' attraction along the river and if they pollute the river, the community living downriver will be affected by what takes place upriver. A similar attitude is expected from all visitors.

The community intends to further expand their tourism activities around their rich culture and heritage (Fig. 2). They are proud of their Penan identity and their past nomadic lifestyle. One of the tourism products that they plan to offer is a 'Penan nomadic homestay'. In this unique homestay, tourists will be able to experience the nomadic lifestyle and daily activities of Penans in the forest. The village head and elders also consider traditional handicraft made from rattan as a good source of income.

Figure 1
Long Lamai village landscape



Figure 2

Demonstration of local dance for tourists



Controlled and sustainable tourism

Penans are strongly concerned with the kind of tourism in their area. Susan, mother of two kids, is involved in handicraft and recently started a homestay, she shared that; "*Our elders decide what to show to tourist, because we all have to watch safety first*". On the ownership of tourism activities in Long Lamai she further added that; "*We (as a host) are like parents to our visitors and tourists, who take their child to market. Although the child would want everything which looks attractive but we as parents know what would be good for them, and it is the same with opening our area and products to the tourists.*" Thus, villagers regulate jungle walks and the activities in the forests for the safety reasons.

By following their local rules and protocols the community can also control/minimize negative effects on the environment.

Conservation of Penan culture and knowledge

Penans see tourism as an opportunity to preserve their local culture and knowledge of their ancestors. One of the elders, Richard (67 years old) shared that "*Most importantly, tourism will help the young generation to learn the Penan culture and history; it will also help to preserve it. By making it a tourism activity others will know about our traditions as we also have many things to share with people*".

Discussion

In the following section, the researcher has discussed selected themes as extracted from the interviews and general observations of the Penan community in Long Lamai.

Tourism in Long Lamai: Collaborative vs competitive

While designing business strategies for any community, it is very important to understand the general nature and specifics of that community. Though many researchers have doubted the possibility of implementing community participation in tourism planning (Addison, 1996; Taylor, 1995) however, community participation in Tourism planning is still the best course of action, despite the implementation barriers (Okazaki, 2008). Penans have a strong communal bond, which exhibits a particular process of sharing (Davis & Henley, 1990). The greatest transgression in Penan society is see hun, a term that translates roughly as a failure to share (Devis, 1991). In Long Lamai, families take turns in

providing services such as the homestay and boat transport to the tourists, to ensure a fair and equal distribution to earn cash income from tourists and visitors. Very few people are involved in more than one kind of tourism activity.

However during this study, it was observed that at the moment there are two distinct attitudes within the community, one represented by the elders and another by the youngsters. Elders are more concerned with the welfare of the whole community and emphasising the need to follow the local rules. The elders make all major decisions in the community so they are very influential in bringing any change to the community. They have a very strong sense of sharing, co-ordination and aspiration. For example, Stanley recently started his homestay and other than cash income, one of his pressing motivations was to help the village headman, who was always having many guests and tourists staying at his house and consequently facing difficulties in managing his personal life and family leisure time. The village headman is a government appointed person so most of the visitors and government officials stay at the headman's house.

On the other hand, the young generation, who has been more exposed to external influences, displayed a competitive approach to tourism striving for more facilities and faster growth irrespectively of the villages' capacity to absorb tourism. For example the youth group is mainly involved in handicraft business. The prices of the handicrafts are not yet standardised as compared to other tourism services (such as boat rents, homestay and tour guides have standard prices).

According to Devis (1991), "*the Penan are egalitarian and non-hierarchical ... In the absence of social stratification, there are no specialists. Although certain individuals may be more talented than others at specific tasks, the hunting and gathering adaptation demands self-sufficiency, and each person must be capable of participating in every societal activity.*" Hence to get the local support it is important to adopt a balanced approach that can include people of both attitudes.

Gender and tourism in Long Lamai

Penans are highly egalitarian in nature and there is little disparity in gender (Winschiers-Theophilus et al., 2013). Both women and men have distinct roles in daily lives. Men go hunting while women help in padi (fields) with their other family members. The homestays in the village are known under the name of the male head of the household (as a face to the visitors) but are run by the women. The latter play an active role in all homestay activities, such as welcoming guests, interacting with them, and taking care of the finances. Women are the backbone of each homestay and compared to men in the community, more women, especially mothers, are becoming involved in tourism activities to earn extra cash for their children's education. One young woman is running a small grocery shop at her longhouse and is interested to open a homestay as she wants to save some money for the schooling of her child. Similar views were expressed by Gayut Lim, the local artist from Long Lamai, who sells his paintings to visitors and tourists.

Handicraft has always played a major part in Penans' life, where men and women both have developed their special skills in making handicrafts. Penan women learn basic handicraft skills from elder women in their family. Their hand woven mat, baskets, headbands, hand bands and other traditional craft made by rattan is a major source of income for these women. Currently they are learning new skills to modernise, enhance the quality and vary the designs of their handicraft with the support of UNIMAS. They display these handicrafts in their homes and sell it to the visitors who coming to Long Lamai. Gradually more and more women are joining the handicraft business. Traditionally, the Penan men are the best blowpipe makers. Many of the village elders can make blowpipes and with the

recent development in the village, they learned how to make boats as well as wood-carvings. William, the head of boat association shared that after 2009, when the tourists started coming to the village he learnt boat making from the people of neighbouring villages of Long Puak and Long Banga.

Tourism supporting cultural preservation

Although Penans are keen to send the next generation out for further education they equally desire their youth to return and make a living within the village. Tourism is considered as one of the main opportunities to achieve exactly this. Moreover the keen interest of researchers and tourists in the Penan's cultural heritage is seen as a unique chance to redirect the youth's attention to cultural practices and traditions.

The elders want the youth to learn about the Penan culture and knowledge for example hunting, forest knowledge, agriculture and their own sign language which Penans used to practise in jungle while hunting and searching for different plants (Zaman & Winschiers-Theophilus, 2015). The elders believe that if the demonstration of traditional practices becomes a tourist attraction, the youth will be drawn to learn and earn from it.

Enhancing interactions

Engagement in tourism can affect social networks and community organisation in a number of ways, positively and negatively. Community members, especially people related to tourism are keen to learn new skills and knowledge from their visitors and guests. They want to learn how to entertain their guests. This was one of the main reasons that many community members came to the cooking class arranged by the researcher including the village headman. Language barriers are another issue that can cause problems between tourists and the host community. Many of the community members showed their desire to learn English language so they can communicate with the visitors. A few homestay owners have learned basic English through meeting different visitors coming to their community. However, to comply with the new tourism demands, Penans believe that they need training in different aspects of rural tourism. We observed that local tourism operators facing problem in day to day tourism activities such as managing finances, guiding tourists and understanding dietary needs of the visitors.

Second line of leadership

The Long Lamai community has a system of mentorship for the young population in the village. There is a youth organisation under the church which is active in daily life activities and decision making in the community. It is a common practice of community to have a combination of an elder and a youth individual for any management position in community governance organisations. The researchers also noted that in the initial stages of opening Long Lamai to the outside world people, community elders were involved in managing their travel and other activities. Now the young generation is doing those tasks. Sammy sent his son Zuel, 18, to study a course in Tourism and Hospitality in a local university in Kuching. According to Zuel (Yoon, 2012); "*I will return and set up our own homestay here. I want to welcome visitors from near and far. I want to help bring positive changes to my community.*"

To clearly divide responsibilities and to provide better services, the community is developing associations, for each group of tourism activities, which will manage and plan the tourism activities in Long Lamai. Currently community has a boat association and few other organizational structures under the local church. These associations are also involved in the planning of services to offer to the tourists that are attractive and safe at the same time.

Summary and conclusion

Although many studies have suggested the importance of community perspective, the practical actions required to explore it have seldom been articulated. Many indigenous groups of Malaysia are located in the Malaysian Borneo Island. Their sustainable and healthier way of life and culture is not only a great attraction for the outer world but also serves as protection to natural resources. Although Long Lamai Penans have strong community bonds, the lack of basic facilities requires families to migrate to urban areas to offer a better life to their children. Tourism is considered as an opportunity to avoid migration and improve current life standards in the rural areas. We found that unlike the urban migration that provides support to the communities living in rural area, in case of Long Lamai, the parents involved in the tourism business support their children living in the urban areas. They also obtain cash income from tourism activities and their cultural heritage is recognized and sustainable environmental practices continued. The rich cultural heritage of the Penan people and the beauty of the surrounding flora and fauna make Long Lamai (and other Penan villages) an attractive place in the era of increasing interest in eco-tourism and cultural tourism. The exotic traditional practices of Penans, such as blow pipe hunting, natural harvesting and molong, toro, and handicrafts (their daily used bag packs), as well as an untouched natural landscape offer a unique potential for tourism. It makes cultural and eco-tourism the crux and essential component of the tourism industry development in this area. Thus Long Lamai has a huge potential for sustainable ecotourism tourism by adopting the more humane and collaborative (local community empowerment) approaches. We also found that the community's management skills need to be further developed to host the visitors, and also to carefully control the numbers of visitors in order to avoid any negative impact. In spite of increasing demand for tourism in Long Lamai, Penans believe in controlled tourism. They believe that if limited number of tourists visit then not only they will get better hosting but also less harm to the environment, which is exactly what United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism (UNWTO, 2005).

'Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.'

Acknowledging this fact that without active and meaningful local involvement, no plan can be successful (Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013), we postulate that the communities' perspective directly impact positioning strategies. The objective of this study was to gain an insight into the local perspective of an indigenous community on tourism. The paper also raises the important fact that for indigenous people benefit sharing is insufficient to get their support. There are a number of other components that need to be understood by tourism officials and policy makers, which should be included in positioning strategies. To build just a homestay is not a solution for the growth of a rural destination but taking communities concern regarding their environment, culture and history into consideration is required. The findings of the study also support Lo, Mohamad, Songan and Yeo's (2012) research about highlighting the impact of tourism on local communities for positioning and branding of tourism destination. It is very important to understand local perspective before planning and implementing any development plan for indigenous people like Penans. Because any plan developed for rural areas and particularly for indigenous community cannot be successful unless it is completely in line with the local people views and concerns.

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