The Role of Government on Community Resilient in the Homestay Industry in Malaysia

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Abstract

The level of resilience measured will determine the action to be taken by the community as well as the government to ensure the homestay operators sustained in the market. In Malaysia, community resilience may not be associated with disaster as severe natural disaster does not happen in Malaysia. In the context of this study, community resilience may be referred as the ability of the homestay community to enhance and sustain in the business. The Government role in the context of resilience involves monetary support, political influences and commitment; policies making, planning, legal and regulatory system, interaction with emergency response and recovery, accountability and community participation. The role of government in policy making and planning a strategic Tourism plan has been stated and registered in most references and it’s vary from one country to another. This study focus at community-based homestay through the concept of resilience, the findings should increase understanding of various aspect of community resiliency, developing the government role within the homestay community at large. Subsequently, this information can assist the policy makers in planning effective strategies and maintaining the resiliency in the homestay tourism community. It is important for the community resilience to find ways to protect and propagate what is valued and central for their survival. The findings from this study is hoped to provide some indicatition to the government as what role to play in enhancing the sustainability of homestay tourism. In this regards, more strategic approach can be recommended to increase the government role and involvement in sustaining the homestay industry.

Keyword: community, resilience, homestay, government role, tourism

Introduction

Tourism Industry has become a major contributor to the world’s economy. World Travel & Tourism Council, (WTTC, 2012), reported the gross output for the year 2011 were US$3.5 trillion and employing 207 million people all over the world. Forecast to remain positive in 2012, at 2.8%, which is slightly below 2011’s growth of 3.0%. It is growing continuously at 4% to 5% annually. According to the United Nation Environmental Program, (UNEP, 2012), the number of international tourist has increased from 25 million in 1950 to 980 million in 2011, and projected to reach 1 billion in 2012 and 1.56 billion by the year 2020. As for Malaysia, the arrival for 2020 is targeted at 36 million tourists with receipt of 168 billion. The tourism industry contributes to the economic development through among others, providing employment and business opportunities, infrastructure improvement and increased in foreign exchange and tax revenue (Ministry of Tourism, 2012).
Malaysia has been ranked number ninth as world top destination visited in the year of 2011 (UNWTO 2012). Homestay programme is one of the contributors to the development of tourism industry in Malaysia. Launched in 1995 in Temerloh, Pahang, homestay programme is an initiative under the Rural Tourism Master Plan aimed to increase participation of rural communities in tourism industry (Ministry Of Tourism Malaysia, 2011) taking into consideration, the importance of local communities engagement and benefits from the tourism development (Wearing, Wearing & McDonald, 2009).

In terms of homestay’s achievement in Malaysia, the amount of revenue for 2011 was reported at RM15,736,277.60, an increase of 26.8% compared to the year of 2010. The number of international tourist increased by 21.4%, mainly from Singapore, Japan and Europe, while number of domestic tourist increased by 32.6% compared to 2010 (Ministry of Tourism, 2012) illustrating the prospect of homestay in Malaysia.

The government had allocated RM14463000 in the year of 2012 for homestay programme which is an increased of 382% compared to the previous year. A series activity of promotion has taken place domestically and internationally (Ministry of Tourism, 2012). According to Hamdan (2012), although there are an increased of revenue and arrival, the distribution of income differ from one villages to another which determine the operator to be categorized as active and inactive operators and even some of them have stopped their operation. The focus of this study will be on both active and inactive operators as to identify the new determinants that influences the community resilience in homestay industry.

The role of the Government does not only confine to the budget allocated to the homestay operator but beyond that whereby the policy, exposure, knowledge and guidance need to be emphasized (Alexander, McKenna. 1998). It is also important for the homestay operator to have knowledge about the industry and the risk in order for them to be prepared in facing any challenges and circumstances now and in the future (Harun. 2011)

Knowing and understanding the vulnerability will enable them to be prepared and take necessary action in order to remain resilient (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008)

The government’s role in promoting the Malaysian homestay has been very visible through aggressive marketing, dissemination of information, relevant education programme, proper advice and the partnership alliances amongst the public-private alliance. The Ministry of Tourism has continuously provided basic infrastructure and facilities such as electricity, roads, telecommunication systems and water supply to ensure the accessibility to the homestay villages (Ibrahim, 2004). The government’s support of community-based homestay tourism is evident in the recognition that was given by the government by endorsing it as part of the niche tourism product in the 10th Malaysia plan by allocating RM30.6 million for the programme’s development and enhancement (Ministry of Tourism, 2012). However, despite of all the effort, there are huge number of the operator remain inactive and even some of them have discontinue operation (Hamdan, 2012). This is an indication that the homestay community resilient in the country diverge from one another.

As most of the previous studies have focused on the community resilience aspects looking into the disaster risk reduction (Twigg, 2007), community preparedness (Calgaro & Lloyd, 2008; Colten, Kates & Laska, 2008; Twigg, 2007), and the government support (Twigg, 2007) as the cause that determine the resiliency level, limited study has look at community preparedness as one of the variable that mediates the relationship between the knowledge on vulnerability reduction and community resilience and government support as one of the variable that moderate the relationship between knowledge on vulnerability reduction and community preparedness.
Although some scholars have attempted to explore the key factors influencing community resilience in the city (Griesbach, 2007; Unsworth, Ball, Bauman, Chatterton, Goldring, Hill & Julier, 2011), the resilience in volunteer communities (Hegney, Ross, Baker, Clark, King, Buikstra, Luke, McLachlan & Stallard, 2008) the community resilience in hazardous environment (Tobin & Whiteford, 2002; Landau, Mittal & Wieling, 2008; Walsh, 2007) the community resilience in facing natural disasters (Calgaro et al, 2008; Rigg, Grundy-Warr, Law & Tan-Mullins, 2008) the empirical research towards an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing the community resilience to sustain the homestay operators is still in its infancy. Given that the Malaysian government has invested a lot of efforts in developing homestay tourism, it is important to investigate the determinants of the community resilience in order to sustain in the business.

Research objectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of the following factors: knowledge on vulnerability reduction, government support and community preparedness on the degree of the homestay community resilience.

Objective 1: To identify the determinants that influences the homestay resilience community to remain and sustain in the business.

Objective 2: To examine the mediating effect of community preparedness in the relationship between the knowledge on vulnerability reduction and community resilience.

Objective 3: To examine the moderating effect of government support in the relationship between the knowledge on vulnerability reduction and community preparedness.

Significance of the study

To contribute towards the understanding of the factors that can increase the homestay operators’ resilient level as to sustain in the business. It is important for the community resilient to find ways to protect and propagate what is valued and central for their survival.

Academic Contributions

Previous literature has provided a logical framework to better understanding the concept of resilience, as clarified by several theories such as the Vulnerable Social-Ecological Pastoral Model (Klien, et al, 2011); DRC Typology (Gary, 1999) and the Vulnerability Frame Work (Turner et al.). These theories disclose that comprehensive community resilience involves several categories of resilience ranging from disaster setting to a normal environment that people live, which are varied, can be classified into different types and make different contributions to different circumstances. However, many previous studies have focused on disaster area in general, with a dearth of literature on community-based tourism, which is the primary focus of this study.

The findings of this study will further add to the literature by extending previous models of resilience to an area that has not been explored; community-based homestay tourism. This is a significant step for the enhancement of sociology theory. A valid theory is a theory that must be shown to work under a variety of circumstances (Torraco, 2004). Because community-based homestay tourism has a number of unique characteristics, the application of sociology theory in this context provides a
significant contribution to the literature on resilient. The findings from this study can explain the resilient nature of community-based homestay tourism.

Practical Contributions

This study focuses on the community-based homestay tourism vulnerability through the concept of resilience, of which should be able to increase the understanding of various aspects of community resiliency. This will help in developing the preparedness within the homestay community at large and will subsequently, will assist the policy makers in planning effective strategies and maintaining the resiliency in the homestay tourism community.

Literature review

Homestay tourism in Malaysia

Homestay is a programme where the tourist can live together with the chosen host family and have the opportunity to interact as well as experience the daily way of life of the family and culture of Malaysians. Homestay is different from the concepts of other moderate accommodation such as “bed & breakfast” where the families do not live together and their management operates in manner similar as a normal hotel management. (Jabatan Perangkaan Malaysia, 2007). Homestay can be considered as one of the new tourism products in Malaysia whereby it is a combination of tourism and recreation that has grown since 16 years ago. Malaysia Homestay Programme was officially launched in 1995 in Temerloh, Pahang, and is an initiative under the Rural Tourism Master Plan which aims to increase participation of rural communities in tourism sector (Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, 2012).

In Malaysia, the development of rural tourism has grown since the last 20 years through the development of homestay programs. In the context of this country, rural tourism refers to the development of homestay programs in villages throughout the country. Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism defines the homestay programme as a place where the tourist and host’s family gather and experience daily activities of the family direct and indirectly (Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, 2012). In the homestay programme, efforts were made to increase the involvement and participation of villagers in the area of tourism.

In terms of performance of Homestay in Malaysia, the data in 2011 showed that the amount of revenue through the Homestay programme is RM15,736,227.60. The total number of tourist arrivals for Homestay in 2011 were 254,981, an increase of 21.6% compared to the year 2010. In terms of tourist arrivals, the number of international tourists increased by 21.4% over 2010, mainly from Singapore, Japan and Europe. Number of domestic tourists increased by 32.6% compared to 2010 (Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, 2011). The trend illustrates the prospect of the homestay program in Malaysia.

To date, although much progress has been achieved through homestay program, there are still rooms of improvement that need to be implemented for the continuation and strengthening of this program. These matters are dealt with in the Rural Tourism Master Plan (2003) which states, “In our view, the Homestay initiative in its present form has failed to deliver on the expectation for it. This is regrettable, as there are many commendable features to the scheme, particularly the way in which it aims to provide an authentic experience and to retain the economic benefits in the community.
Community resilience

Community Resilience has been associated with disaster in many studies done earlier. The concepts of community resilience refer to the capacity of individual or community to cope with stress, overcome adversity or adapt positively to change. The ability to bounce back from negative experiences may reflect the innate qualities of individuals or be the result of learning and experience. Regardless of the origin of resilience, there is evidence to suggest that it can be developed and enhanced to promote greater wellbeing. Resilience is not regarded as a quality that is either present or absent in a person or a group but rather a process may vary across circumstances or time (Luthar, 2003).

The concept of resiliency may be applied to numerous entities, define at different level of aggregation. For example in the context of organization resiliency, (Caralli & Wilson (2004), define operational resiliency as the organization ability to adapt to and manage risks that emanate from day to day operation. Organizations that have resilient operation are able to systematically and transparently cope with disruptive event so that the overall ability of the whole organization to meets its mission is not affected.

In personal health resiliency is the ability to spring back from and successfully adapt to adversity. An increasing body of research from the field of psychology, psychiatry, and sociology is showing that most people including young people can bounce back from risk, stress, crises, and trauma and experience life success (Manyena, 2006). Like the words “sustainability”, which is also poorly defined, the term “resilience” will undoubtedly take on different and expanded meaning as it is used by practitioners and other disciplines.

In physics and engineering, for example, resilience is defined as the capacity of a material to absorb energy when it is deformed elastically and upon unloading to have this energy recovered. In other words, it is the maximum energy per volume that can be stored. In the context of system ecology, one of the most familiar definitions is provided by the Resilience Alliance research consortium, which defines resilience as “the capacity of an eco system to tolerate disturbance without collapsing into a qualitatively different state that is controlled by a different set of process (Norriss, Steven, Pfefferbaum, Wyche & Pfefferbaum, 2007).

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Knowledge on vulnerability reduction

The meaning of vulnerability are often been classify as easy to be exposed to injury and damage. It also means how a person or a group of people being influence for their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover natural hazard combination of factors that determine how far to which someone life, livelihood, poverty and other asset are at risk by a discrete and identifiable event in nature and society (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008).

Vulnerability have time period and can be measured in term of future damage to the livelihood and does not only confine to the juncture of any event occur to life and property. Vulnerable group are those livelihoods being affected by risk and find it is hard to reconstruct their livelihood and in turn
makes them becoming vulnerable in the subsequent event. Word of livelihood is important to vulnerability definition (Brooks, 2003).

Vulnerability relates to the complexity of social, economic and political considerations whereby their everyday life is tight which structured their choice and option in facing environmental hazard. The most vulnerable are those who are left with few choices, constraint due to the discrimination, political powerlessness, physical disability, lack of education and employment, illness, the absence of legal rights, and other historically grounded practices of domination and marginalization (Brooks, 2003).

There are three paradigm used in the field of war analogy, which see disaster as attacking and disturbance agents to the social system, disaster as a manifestation of vulnerabilities inherent in the social order, and disaster as connected to uncertainty which leads to the disruption of systems that will increase social complexity. As counterpart to resilience, factor such as developmental immaturity, personality (e.g. neurotism), learned helplessness and denial base coping exist at several levels of individual (Gaillard, 2007).

Demographic, environmental, and characteristic are also associated with vulnerability. Demography, for example includes age, ethnic minority status, and education level, while the example of environmental are marginal political, economy status and family dynamics community fragmentation. The important elements are not on the vulnerable group but their capacity to recover and the condition that’s leads them to disasters. Critical causes to this process area:

- Material and economic vulnerability, whereby recourses cannot be reached easily
- Social vulnerability, disintegration of social.
- Ecological vulnerability, re classification of the environmental and inability to protect
- Organizational vulnerability, weak in local and institutional structure
- Educational vulnerability, less access to the information and lack of knowledge
- Political vulnerability, limited access to political power and less representation
- Cultural vulnerability, limited to certain belief and custom.
- Physical vulnerability, weak in individuals and building.

**Government Support**

Under Governance the component of resilience are policy, priority, strategy and political commitment. Politician consensus must be obtained on the formation and establishment of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) policy whereby, clear vision, committed, effective and accountable community leadership must be appointed accordingly. The plans must be put into operation and must be reported through participatory process. It is important for the community to understand the relevant legislation, regulations and procedures. Their rights and legal obligation of government other stakeholder need to be understood, Not only that, mechanism for compliance and enforcement of law regulation, penalties safety, building codes, land use regulation, other laws and regulation need to be listened and consulted (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008).

All levels in the government must take holistic and integrated approach for them to understand the role of DRR and it is a task to DRR to been seen as carrying out their duty accordingly in order to achieve wider community goals. All the integration such as natural resource management, and sectorial policies including health, education, social protection, sustainable development, climate change adaptation, poverty eradication, local planning policies, regulation and decision making system must not leave disaster risk as an important element to be highlighted.
It is a duty for DRR together with the community and local level emergency team to plan strategies and to build a linkages between emergency management in implementing post disaster reconstruction plans and actions with the incorporation with the risk reduction. The responsibilities for DRR must clearly defined and the inter intuitional mandates and designated responsibility must be clearly stated and coordinated with all related bodies involved in the disaster management and disaster risk reduction (Twigg, 2007).

Howard L Hughes (1984) stated in The Tourism Management Journal that, “The tourist industry is not without its proponents of further government support. In particular it has frequently been observed that the industry (especially the accommodation and facilities sectors) receives rather less support than similar industries in other countries. Government support may mean that tourist enterprises are stimulated and continue in existence because of that support and not particularly because of consumer demand.” This statement showed that, the role of government is a must in the tourism industry in order to ensure the resiliency of the product. The degree of support by the government varies from one to another and in most country the resiliency of the industry is based on the government support.

According to a journal, on marine policy,” effective stakeholder involvement in marine planning is therefore essential to its success. It has been suggested that in order to be effective, stakeholder involvement in marine planning should be initiated as early as possible and be continuous throughout the process. Ultimately, stakeholders will drive decisions on the allocation of space for a particular use, combination of uses, or non-use, which is why they should be central to the decision-making process as they are the agents for delivering change (Bernadine Maguire, Jonathan Potts & Stephen Fletcher, 2012). This statement is an example on the importance of government involvement and support towards the planning of such tourism project. In fact it has emphasized the involvement to such program should started at the early stage and should be continuously done. The role of government as an agent of changes is also recommended to take place in order to ensure the smoothness of the particular program. Being involvement in such program definitely require the government to understand the system, objective and vision of the project. In the contact of homestay in Malaysia, the result might not be effective if the government do not have such interest to improve or ensure the resiliency of the product. In other words if government is treating the homestay product as the same as other products and as not as a competitive product, then it can never be expanded or develop. Therefore it is important for the government, as the stake holder to analyse the program (Bernadine Maguire, Jonathan Potts & Stephen Fletcher, 2012). Bernadine Maguire, Jonathan Potts & Stephen Fletcher (2012) also stated that, “Stakeholder analysis is an approach for understanding a system, and changes in it, by identifying key actors or stake-holders and assessing their respective interests in that system”.

The role of the government does not stop at the analysis stage only. A lot need to be done such as looking at the evaluation, appraisal, research, providing tool and improving system for the program. The government involvement can also be utilized in various processes, stated in a marine journal as. “ It can be utilised for various purposes including analysis, formulation, appraisal and evaluation of projects and policies, research on natural resource management and its associated change, providing systematic support for improving ongoing co-operative management processes, a management tool in policy-making and a tool for identification of conflict. The questions are:

1. Who should be involved?
2. When should stakeholders be involved?
3. How should stakeholders be involved?
4. Management of stakeholder involvement”
The above statement clearly indicated that government support or involvement does not mean that they are involved or can interfere in every single step on the process. The questions are: who should be involved, when to be involved, how to be involved must be taken into consideration. The involvement of the government must be managed properly and accordingly. Failing to do so might end up with a negative result. This statement is also supported by Bernadine Maguire, Jonathan Potts & Stephen Fletcher, 2012

“They involvement of stakeholders in marine planning must be carefully managed to enable efficient and effective inter-action throughout the process that is proportionate to the needs of both the marine planning process and the stakeholders concerned.”

In this study as far as homestay is concerned, the government involvement to execute such program is rather important especially in drawing a guideline to be followed by the homestay operator. Therefore drawing of necessary Act abide by the law is also important to ensure there is a proper guide line to be implemented and followed. This has been proved in many countries with regards to their tourism industry. Looking from the perspective of destination marketing management, it is stated that “the shift in the preferred spatial scale of economic governance is significant. England had a complex and densely-populated land-scape of public sector support for tourism in early 2010 and architecturally this was dominated by the region. Regional Tourist Boards had existed since the Development of Tourism Act in 1969, and they had been charged with implementing national government policy aspirations for tourism within parts of England as well as Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland prior to devolution (Tim Coles, Claire Dinan & Fiona Hutchison, 2012). This is again an indication on the important of implementing the national government policy in the tourism industry. In order to be more specific, focus and to cater the need of each region it is recommended that the government bodies that look into this industry to be divided into region or smaller area so that their role can be more effective.

Tim Coles, Claire Dinan & Fiona Hutchison (2012) also indicated, to identify the need for ‘new industry-led local tourism bodies’ in the form of ‘smaller, highly focused, industry-led partnerships between tourism firms and government’. The government would work collaboratively with the private sector, other DMOs and their respective Local Enterprise Partnership (LEPs) in order to leverage investment, stimulate development, and contribute to other tourism policy ambitions that has been set out. It should be highlighted that, the involvement by the government does not only confine to one aspect, the development of human capital is also important to the tourism industry.

A lot can be done by the government to support the industry especially to be ready with sufficient skill and trained workers. “The story of successful tourism enterprises is one that is largely about people—how they are recruited, how they are managed, how they are trained and educated, how they are valued and rewarded, and how they are supported through a process of continuous learning and career development. None of this happens by accident” (Tom Baum & Edith Szivas, 2007)

Tom Baum & Edith Szivas (2007) also stated that, “The role of the government, together with the industry players in the development of tourism industry cannot be denied. Tourism is an important area of economic activity within many countries in both developing and developed worlds. As such, how the role of government and its agencies is perceived in helping to formulate policy, shape practice and deliver services is influenced by politically constructed interpretations of the role of the state in the management of the economy and the wider social and cultural environment (Tom Baum & Edith Szivas, 2007). It also indicated that government act as a major player in the industry that
supported the growth and well being of the economics of the country. “Government is a major player in shaping the economy and its development in all countries, in measure ranging from active intervention to deliberate distancing or incompetent neglect. The purpose of economic activity is to increase the well-being of individuals, and economic structures that are able to do so are more desirable than those that do not. In aspiring to support such structures and to enhance the well-being of a local community or nation, the roles that the state can take vary considerably and will, in turn, impact upon the complementary responsibilities of other stakeholders in the economic well-being of the locality.

These stakeholders include individuals, whether of economically active age, retired or in education as well as the generators of wealth within both the public and private sector” (Tom Baum & Edith Szivas, 2007). Government support in implementing the tourism policy will lead to the development and expansion of the tourism industry in a country. “All governments, be they local or national, have a policy for tourism, whether it represents an active involvement, a laissez-faire approach or somewhere in between (Hall, 1994). Veal (1994) notes that, in this context, such reference encompasses governmental bodies at national, state and regional levels and that such entities also include a range of agencies allied to or working on behalf of government”(Tom Baum & Edith Szivas, 2007).

Tom Baum & Edith Szivas, (2007) also stated that “We have already noted that the role of government with respect to tourism policy, development and planning varies according to the perceived importance of tourism as a sector within the national or local economy and political philosophies that inform economic and social policy. Again it is up to the government on how to prioritize the tourism industry; in this case if homestay is considered as their top priority that contributes revenue to the country, the government will determine how much involvement and support will be given to the industry. As tourism has matured (and some would highlight the contribution that investment in HRD has played in this change process), the role for government has moved away from operational involvement to one where a policy and strategic remit is much more evident. (Tom Baum & Edith Szivas, 2007). In fact it is recommended that the government to play greater role not only confine to the management of a tourism project but also to be involved in the policy and strategy planning of a tourism product.

Community Preparedness

According to Morrissey & Reser (2003), individual, community or organizational preparedness is shaped by several factors including economic, political, social and cultural factors. The preparedness process begin with hazards and vulnerability analyses that attempt to anticipate what problem are likely to occur and proceed with the development of ways to address those problem actively. The primary goal of emergency preparedness is the households, business and government agencies to develop appropriate strategies for responding when disaster occurs. Preparedness also aims at ensuring that resources necessary to carrying out an effective response are in place prior to the onset of disaster or that they can be obtained promptly when needed (Morrissey & Reser 2003).

Conclusion

The government support and involvement is important to the development of tourism industry. In the case of homestay as a product, this study will look into the degree of government involvement in order to ensure the resiliency of homestay in Malaysia.
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