Community Resilience and Knowledge on Vulnerability in Tourism Development

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ABSTRACT

Tourism industry has become a major contributor to the world’s economy. Being as one on the economy contributor, it is important to take the preemptive measure in order to remain intact. In other word, it is important to remain resilience. 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. 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. This conceptual study will further add to the literature by exploring resilience in community-based homestay tourism. As this study focus at community-based homestay tourism vulnerability through the concept of resilience, the conclusion made at the end of this study should increase understanding of various aspect of community resiliency within the homestay community at large. Subsequently, this information can assist the policy makers and the homestay operators in planning effective strategies and maintaining the resiliency in the homestay tourism community.

Keywords: community, resilience, homestay tourism, vulnerable, 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 RM14,463,000.00 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 (Schevyens & 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; Rig, Grundy-Warr, Law & Tan-Mullins, 2008) 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.

Significance of the study is hoped 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. Additionally, the findings from this study is hoped to provide some indication to the government as what role to play in enhancing the sustainability of homestay tourism.

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).

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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 (Norris, Steven, Pfefferbaum, Wyche & Pfefferbaum, 2007).

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.

Knowledge on Vulnerability

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. Politian 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 stake holder 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 institutional 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).

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that it is important for the community resilience to find ways to protect and propagate what is valued and central for their survival. In this regards, more strategic approach can be recommended to increase the community resilient in sustaining the homestay activities. It is recommended that the government plays a major role in enhancing the sustainability of homestay tourism. In this regards, more strategic approach can be explored to ensure that the community have sufficient knowledge on vulnerability thus, sustaining the homestay activities. Nonetheless, the assumptions have yet to be further investigated.

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