



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***FACTORS INFLUENCING SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS TOURISM AMONG THE
MAH MERI COMMUNITY IN CAREY ISLAND, MALAYSIA***

PUVANESWARAN KUNASEKARAN

FEM 2014 19



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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

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By

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**Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Studies,
University Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

March 2014

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**FACTORS INFLUENCING SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS
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PUVANESWARAN KUNASEKARAN

March 2014

Chairman: Associate Professor Sarjit Singh Darshan Singh, PhD
Faculty: Human Ecology

This study is aimed to determine the factors that influence the indigenous community to attain sustainable tourism practice. The study area which is selected is Kampung Sungai Bumbon, Carey Island in Selangor. This village also known as Mah Meri Cultural Village (MMCV) is a well established indigenous tourism destination in Malaysia occupied by the Mah Meri community. An initial investigation done in the village provided clearer understanding on the issues of resource scarcity, empowerment, participation and sustainability faced by the community. To answer the research questions, a mixed method study has been employed where qualitative and quantitative methods are combined. The first part of the study is treated as an inductive approach, detailing data collected through in-depth interviews. The naturalistic inquiry study revealed some factors, which were already found by previous researchers, and some new factors emerged. The interview data which had been transcribed and translated was analyzed using discourse analysis technique. Discourse analysis revealed the five community resources that are important to the Mah Meri community to sustain their tourism practice. The five community resources are cultural resources, human resources, financial resources, infrastructure resources and natural resources. Cultural resources have been the most important asset of the Mah Meri community to run tourism successfully. The community also revealed that the scarcity of the natural resources especially *Nyireh Batu* is a big threat for sustainable tourism. Next, the analyzed qualitative data was put under deduction process using quantitative procedures. In inferential analysis, the results from analysis on the variables using statistical techniques, such as correlation analysis and multiple regressions analysis were produced. After finding that all the independent variables are correlated with the dependent variable, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The findings of the multiple regressions show that six variables are significant in predicting the sustainable indigenous tourism; cultural resources, participation, self-reliance, empowerment, capacity building and human resources. The result of the study also does not contradict the social exchange theory, which says that the people who get benefit from tourism,

support tourism. The indigenous people who involved directly in tourism tended to have positive perceptions towards indigenous tourism, because they directly receive economic benefits from tourism. Apart from that, the other villagers who are not directly involved in tourism are not averse to tourism. Although they barely get any income from tourism, they are still in favor of tourism mainly for impact on cultural and environmental sustainability derived by tourism activities. Thus, although this study supports the social exchange theory, the outcome shows that the non-participants of tourism in Kampung Sungai Bumbon are also supporting tourism but their support is not as high as the direct participants (weavers, wood carvers and dancers). The finding also proves that the community is not practicing individual development but supports people involved in tourism for the betterment of the whole village. This argument is an important contribution to the social exchange theory which heavily focused on the economic benefit and community development and neglecting the socio-cultural and environmental perspectives.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**FAKTOR-FAKTOR YANG MEMPENGARUHI PENCAPAIAN
PELANCONGAN ORANG ASLI MAMPAN OLEH KOMUNITI MAH MERI DI
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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi masyarakat tempatan untuk mencapai amalan pelancongan mampan. Kawasan kajian yang dipilih ialah Kampung Sungai Bumbon, Pulau Carey, Selangor. Kampung ini yang juga dikenali sebagai Perkampungan Budaya Mah Meri merupakan destinasi pelancongan Orang Asli yang utama di Malaysia serta dihuni oleh komuniti Mah Meri. Satu siasatan awal yang dilakukan di kampung ini telah memberi pemahaman yang lebih jelas mengenai isu-isu kekurangan sumber, kuasa, penyertaan dan kemampunan yang dihadapi oleh masyarakat. Isu-isu yang dibangkitkan oleh masyarakat dan jurang dalam kajian lepas mengenai kekurangan penyelidikan dalam pelancongan tempatan dan hubungannya dengan kemampunan telah membentuk permasalahan kajian. Untuk menjawab soalan-soalan penyelidikan, kajian kaedah campuran (*mix method*) telah dipilih di mana kaedah kualitatif dan kuantitatif digabungkan. Bahagian pertama kajian ini dianggap sebagai satu pendekatan induktif, memperincikan data yang dikumpul melalui temu bual mendalam. Kajian siasatan naturalistik mendedahkan beberapa faktor, yang telah dikenalpasti oleh penyelidik sebelum ini, dan beberapa faktor-faktor baru yang muncul (*emerged themes*). Data temu bual yang telah disalin dan diterjemahkan telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan teknik analisis wacana (*discourse analysis*). Analisis wacana mendedahkan lima sumber masyarakat yang penting kepada masyarakat Mah Meri untuk mengekalkan amalan pelancongan mereka. Sumber-sumber masyarakat tersebut adalah sumber budaya, sumber manusia, sumber kewangan, sumber infrastruktur dan sumber alam sekitar. Sumber budaya telah menjadi aset yang paling penting dalam masyarakat Mah Meri untuk menjalankan pelancongan dengan jayanya. Masyarakat ini juga mendedahkan bahawa kekurangan sumber-sumber semulajadi terutamanya kayu Nyireh Batu adalah ancaman besar bagi pelancongan yang mampan. Seterusnya, data kualitatif yang dianalisis telah diletakkan di bawah proses deduktif menggunakan prosedur kuantitatif. Dalam analisis inferens, keputusan daripada analisis ke atas pembolehubah menggunakan teknik statistik seperti analisis korelasi dan analisis regresi pelbagai dihasilkan. Selepas mendapati bahawa semua pembolehubah bebas

yang dikaitkan dengan pembolehubah bersandar, analisis regresi pelbagai telah dijalankan. Penemuan analisis regresi pelbagai menunjukkan enam pembolehubah menjadi faktor penting dalam meramalkan pelancongan orang asli yang mampan; sumber budaya, penyertaan, berdikari, pendayaupayaan, pembinaan kapasiti dan sumber manusia. Hasil kajian itu juga tidak bercanggah dengan teori pertukaran sosial yang mengatakan bahawa individu yang mendapat manfaat daripada pelancongan akan menyokong pelancongan. Orang asli yang terlibat secara langsung dalam pelancongan cenderung untuk mempunyai persepsi yang positif terhadap pelancongan, kerana mereka menerima faedah ekonomi secara langsung daripada pelancongan. Selain dari itu, penduduk lain yang tidak terlibat secara langsung dalam industri pelancongan tidak menghalang pelancongan. Oleh itu, walaupun kajian ini menyokong teori pertukaran sosial, keputusan menunjukkan bahawa penduduk yang tidak terlibat secara langsung dalam pelancongan di Kampung Sungai Bumbon juga menyokong pelancongan tetapi sokongan mereka tidak begitu tinggi sebagai peserta langsung (penenun, pengukir kayu dan penari). Hasil kajian juga membuktikan bahawa masyarakat yang tidak mengamalkan pelancongan masih menyokong individu yang terlibat dalam pelancongan untuk kebaikan seluruh kampung. Hujah ini adalah sumbangan penting kepada teori pertukaran sosial yang banyak memberi tumpuan kepada kepentingan ekonomi dan pembangunan masyarakat dan mengabaikan perspektif sosio-budaya dan alam sekitar.

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Puvaneswaran Kunasekaran

March 2014

I certify that an Examination Committee met on March 31, 2014 to conduct the final examination of Puvaneswaran Kunasekaran to evaluate his thesis entitled "Factors Influencing Sustainable Indigenous Tourism Among the Mah Meri Community in Carey Island, Malaysia" according to the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of Universiti Putra Malaysia [PU (A) 106] March 15, 1998. Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the degree of Philosophical Doctorate (PhD).

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MMVC	Mah Meri Cultural Village
WTO	World Tourism Organization
JAKOA	Department of Orang Asli Development
JHEOA	Department of Orang Asli Affairs
MOTAC	Ministry of Tourism and Culture
POASM	Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (Association of Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia)
COAC	Centre of Orang Asli Concerns
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Indigenous People and Tourism

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines indigenous populations as communities that live within, or are attached to, geographically distinct traditional habitats or ancestral territories (WHO, 2011). However, indigenesness or originality has various interpretations. The term 'indigenesness' is also subject for debate on how to determine indigenesness of a community (Maaka and Fleras, 2000; and Gegeo, 2001). According to Gomes (2013), the indigenous community of Malaysia, the Orang Asli, claim their indigenesness by their earlier existence in the country and the majority Malay community claim their indigenesness on the basis of their civilization's superiority compared to the Orang Asli community. Generally the indigenous people recognize themselves as being part of a unique public group, originated from groups present in the area before modern states were created and current boundaries described. This rural community also generally maintains cultural and social identities, and social, economic, cultural and political institutions, separate from the mainstream or dominant society or culture.

Unlike other kind of niche tourism, there are not many clear definitions of indigenous tourism. Hall and Weiler (1992) defined indigenous tourism from the tourist, and demand point of view. According to Hall and Weiler (1992), indigenous tourism is a kind of 'special interest' tourism and depends on the primary enthusiasm of the tourist. The tourists are motivated to visit the indigenous people and are driven by their own preferences. In addition, indigenous tourists are looking for first-hand experiences and direct contact with the unique community which is not similar to the tourists' background environment.

The cultural uniqueness which is also regarded as the 'cultural otherness' is considered as an important selling point when it comes to tourism business (Hitchcock and King, 2003). From the tourists' perspective, Urry (1990) argued that tourists' motivation to travel is strongly encouraged by their 'gaze' to leave home and see something different compared to their daily life. The statement that indigenous tourism relies fully on the community uniqueness is also not supported. Indigenous tourism has strong relationship with environmental tourism, nature-based tourism, arts and heritage and adventure tourism (Harron and Weiler, 1992). Indigenous communities in many countries had settled in their traditional area since beginning times, before the habitation of other places in the nation. According to Ma'rof and Taufiq (2008) their cultures have blended, mixed and are restricted to the soil; and their world view depends on it.

One of the most well established definitions explains indigenous tourism as tourist activity in which indigenous people are directly mixed either through control and / or by

having their culture serve as the fundamental nature of the attraction (Hinch and Butler 1996). This definition is drafted by looking at the control possessed by the community.

	Indigenous Control	
Indigenous Theme	Low Degree of Control	High Degree of Control
Indigenous Theme Present	CULTURE DISPOSSESSED	CULTURE CONTROLLED
Indigenous Theme Absent	NON-INDIGENOUS TOURISM	DIVERSIFIED INDIGENOUS

Source: Hinch and Butler (1996)

Figure 1.1: Indigenous Tourism Definition

Through the clarification of Hinch and Butler (1996), there are four possible scenarios that fall under the category of indigenous tourism;

‘Culture Controlled’ - High degree of indigenous control, indigenous theme present;

‘Diversified Indigenous’ - High degree of indigenous control, with indigenous theme absent;

‘Culture Dispossessed’ - Low degree of indigenous control, indigenous theme present; and finally;

‘Non-indigenous tourism’ - Low degree of indigenous control, no indigenous theme

1.1 Orang Asli

Orang Asli or “original people” is used to refer to the indigenous peoples in Peninsular Malaysia. The term Orang Asli is a replacement of the term ‘aborigines’ used by the British colonial administration (Gomes, 2004). This minority community with overall population of only 178,197 represents 0.5% of the Malaysian population. In 2010, JAKOA (Indigenous People Development Department) reported that Orang Asli population had increased to 178,197 in 2010 compared to only 141,230 in 2006. Categorized as minority groups in the country, they comprise of three main groups, namely, Negrito, Senoi/Semai and Proto-Malay.

Table 1.1: The Orang Asli population according to sub-ethnic and states

States	Negrito	Senoi	Proto-Malays	TOTAL
Pahang	925	29,439	37,142	67,506
Perak	2,413	50,281	605	53,299

Kedah	251	19	0	270
Selangor	3	5,073	12,511	17,587
Kelantan	1,381	12,047	29	13,457
Terengganu	34	818	41	893
N.Sembilan	-	96	10,435	10,531
Melaka	1	28	1,486	1,515
Johor	1	55	13,083	13,139
Total	5,009	97,856	75,332	178,197

Source: JAKOA (2010)

As can be seen from the table 1.2, majority of the Orang Asli people are from the states of Pahang and Perak staying in the rural areas. According to the study done by JAKOA (2010), there are 876 indigenous villages in Peninsular Malaysia divided into three main subgroups.

Table 1.2: Ethnic groups of Orang Asli

Senoi	Proto-Malays	Negritos
Semai	Temuan	Kensiu
Temiar	Semelai	Kintak
Jahut	Jakun	Jahai
Che Wong	Kanaq	Lanoh
Semoq Beri	Orang Seletar	Bateq
Mah Meri	Orang Kuala	Mendriq

Source: JAKOA (2010)

From the three main groups, there are 18 sub-ethnic groups who have their own uniqueness in terms of culture and traditions. Orang Asli were separated into three nationwide categories during the English colonization for the objective of assisting the management in those days (Juli Edo, 2006). Each group was separated into sectors; groups situated in several locations in the woodlands, the hills, the rural areas and near the coastline or stream estuary (Amran, 1995).

Gomes (2004) stressed that there should be no doubt that the predecessors of the Orang Asli settled in the Malay Peninsula earlier than the predecessors of Malay community. Hasan Mat Nor (1998) argued that the Negritos are considered to have come to the Malay Peninsula about 25,000 years ago. However, the Semai are the largest population and the oldest indigenous community in Peninsular Malaysia (Ying, 2009). Most of the Semai live at the foothill and mountain areas in the borders of Perak and Pahang (Dentan, 2000). The headman of the Orang Asli community is generally known as 'Tok Batin'. The Tok Batin is in charge of internal affairs and issues regarding the group. Apart from that, the

Tok Batin also is responsible for maintaining the inherited customs, traditions and order in the village.

Development has been the ongoing issue for the Orang Asli community in Malaysia. Several governmental and non-governmental organizations and associations have been established to support the community. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs (JHEOA) was established by the British Government in 1953 and was intended to gain the support of the indigenous community in the battle against communist insurgents (Nicholas, Chopil and Sabak, 2003). Gradually, after independence, the objective of the organization was changed to address the educational, medical and poverty issues of the minority group.

Apart from the governmental agencies, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play an important role in Orang Asli developmental efforts. Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (POASM) was established in 1976 by some members of the Orang Asli community in order to protect the heritage, culture and future of the community. The establishment of POASM has proved that the indigenous community are prepared to lead their own community without being too dependent on outsiders. Apart from that, Centre of Orang Asli Concerns (COAC) was initiated in 1989 by some individuals and Orang Asli members. This organization specifically supports the community in fighting for their rights on various issues ranging from land ownership to education. According to Dentan et al. (1997) COAC encourages and facilitates the development of independent community and regional Orang Asli organizations.

1.2 Tourism in Malaysia

Tourism is at present one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Sharpley (2001) noted that tourism has become one of the largest and fastest growing industries and it is a social phenomenon of major importance. Due to this positive expansion, tourism has achieved a position where it can bring various advantages to the people involved, and the particular country where it is developed (Doh, 2006).

King (2009) has mentioned that most of the tourism activities in Malaysia are packaged regionally such as beach tourism (Penang, Langkawi, Terengganu), heritage tourism (Penang, Melaka and Kuala Lumpur) and nature tourism (national and state parks). According to World Travel & Tourism Council (2007) in Malaysia, tourism accounts for 13.3% of the GDP, and accounts for USD33.6 billion in Malaysia. The service industries which include tourism are now major revenue earners and have become the largest contributors to Malaysia's GDP (46%) compared to manufacturing (30%), agriculture (9.3%) and mining (7.3%). Malaysia ranks 11th in the world in growth, 35th in absolute size, and presently 63rd in relative contribution to national economy. Malaysian tourism employment is estimated at 1,217,000 jobs or 11.8% of total employment and these figures are expected to rise. Tourism is a growing sector, gaining importance, and appears to be a well recognized and supported sector by the government as identified in the various Malaysian Development Plans.

Tourism has been an important industry in Malaysia for a number of years (Musa, 2000) and international arrivals reached 24.6 million and 24.7 million respectively in 2010 and 2011, compared to 10.5 million in 2003 (Ministry of Tourism and Culture, 2012). Table 1.3 shows international tourist arrivals to Malaysia and revenues received from 1998 until 2011.

Table 1.3: International tourist arrivals and receipts to Malaysia

Year	Arrivals/million	Receipts/MYR billion
1998	5.5	8.6
1999	7.9	12.3
2000	10.2	17.3
2001	12.7	24.2
2002	13.2	25.8
2003	10.5	21.3
2004	15.7	29.7
2005	16.4	32.0
2006	17.45	36.3
2007	20.9	46.1
2008	22.0	49.6
2009	23.6	53.4
2010	24.6	56.5
2011	24.7	58.3

Source: Ministry of Tourism (2012)

Growth rates have averaged around 5% since 2007, but slowed in 2011 due to adverse economic conditions globally. Malaysia's popularity can be attributed to a rich natural and cultural heritage and the diversity of attractions in the different states which make up the federation. The Malaysian government has also strongly supported and encouraged longer staying tourists by promoting "Malaysia My Second Home" (MM2H) campaign. The MM2H attracted 8,723 participants between 2002 and 2006 with 1,974 from China; 429 from Bangladesh; 885 from the UK; 522 from Taiwan; 448 from Singapore; 434 from Japan; 427 from Indonesia, 417 from India and almost 300 from Pakistan, Hong Kong and Korea (Honey and Krantz, 2007).

In this campaign, the target market focus is very much focused on pensioners with associated healthcare or health and fitness tourism with Malaysia being marketed as a healthcare care hub. Heart by-pass surgery treatment for these individuals range from US\$6,000 to 7,000 at the Nationwide Heart Institute (Malaysia Healthcare Association, 2012). The travel and leisure industry in this aspect shows styles of improved development and investment, and tourism is a significant driver of macroeconomic development in Malaysia.

1.3 Indigenous Tourism in Malaysia

The fact that Malaysia is a multi-racial country with Malays, Chinese, Indians and various indigenous people from Sabah and Sarawak living and working alongside harmoniously has become a selling point and is heavily used to promote tourism in the country (Malaysia, Truly Asia campaign). However, this promotion (see appendix E) failed to effectively include the indigenous community in their advertisement.

“To know Malaysia is to love Malaysia. A bubbling, bustling melting pot of races and religions where Malays, Indians, Chinese and many other ethnic groups live together in peace and harmony.” (Tourism Malaysia, 2012)

The posters (in Appendix E) show the representatives from Malays, Chinese, Indians and various indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak portraying their unique culture which can lure the international tourists to visit Malaysia in order to experience the “all-in-one” cultural destination. Suet Ching (2010) argued that missing in the posters of ‘cultural package’ are the Orang Asli and this may be deliberate, which then could reflect a deeper, subtler, and hidden complexity in Malaysian inter-ethnic relations. The omission of the Orang Asli image questions whether the government is serious in including the Orang Asli community in the mainstream tourism business. This scenario can be regarded as a big threat to achieve sustainable indigenous tourism development in Malaysia.

King (1993) also argued that the way in which culture is constructed and manipulated is also seen very clearly in the packaging and development of cultural tourism. Some of the promotional materials contain highly misleading characteristics which can be an obstacle of cultural understanding by the tourists (King, 1993). Tourism promotion takes place through a number of institutions but primarily through Tourism Malaysia and Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC) especially for the indigenous tourism.

Kalsom (2011) has said that the Malaysian government consistently seek to achieve sustainable tourism practice by targeting a balance between business imperatives, cultural heritage preservation and environmental protection. This is evident by the establishment of Orang Asli cultural villages and traditional handicraft centres such as the *Pusat Kraftangan Orang Asli* (Orang Asli Handicraft Centre) in Cameron Highlands and Mah Meri Cultural Village at Carey Island.

Indigenous tourism in Malaysia has high potential as a unique attraction, apart from eco-tourism, which caters particularly for tourists from Australia, New Zealand and Europe, who prefer to learn about unique and remote communities. At these indigenous villages, visitors will be able to witness the traditional dances, lifestyle and hunting techniques personally. However, Gomes (2004) has mentioned that the government has prevented tourists from visiting the Orang Asli community in Taman Negara, Pahang. The author also addressed the government’s concern that photographs of half naked women in their natural living styles may give a wrong impression regarding the majority Malay community’s dressing manner.

1.4 Problem statement

Thus the justification to conduct this study is done by highlighting (1) the gap in the literature and (2) the real problem or current scenario in the study area. The real issues of the indigenous community and sustainable tourism was highlighted through personal communication technique and interpreting local government's tourism strategy. This is done to avoid the researcher from considering the problem from only his point of view and to reduce bias.

Community development approach in tourism is generally agreed as one of the ways to influence the change in social and economic state of a particular group of people (Mathieson and Wall, 1991 and Joppe, 1996). Thus the main concern of the problem statement is sustainable indigenous tourism attainment through community development process. The gaps in past studies on community development dimensions of participation, empowerment and capacity building which failed to relate with the sustainable indigenous tourism highlighted. Positive development can only be enjoyed if there is an active participation from the community. Any tourism project aimed to develop the community will not be ignored by the local community even though the outcome may not be found to be profitable (Habibah, 2012). Although outsiders believe that the introduction of tourism will result in community development with limited opportunity cost, the community always ends up paying for the intangible cost. According to Yahaya (2008), the community has to sacrifice their local culture and basic rights in order to satisfy the tourists' needs and achieve development. The huge significance of tourism development on community requires researchers to understand and appreciate the attitude and perception of the community on tourism development in their area. In the past few decades, there has been much research focusing on hosts or residents' perception to tourism (e.g. Doxey, 1975; Butler, 1980; Perdue, Long and Allen, 1987; Kang et al., 1994; Gursoy and Rutherford, 2003; and Smith and Krannich, 2005).

A study in the rural areas of Kedah shows that positive economic and social benefits to rural residents are minimal because of their lack of participation in tourism development, as well as their inability to respond to new employment opportunities brought by tourism (Liu, 2005). This scenario is also supported by Blake et al. (2008), saying that the existence of poverty in rural areas is caused by the ignorance of the local community in involving themselves in tourism. The failure of the host community to promote tourism activities in their area can be a constraint for sustainable development (Thompson, 2004).

In addition, some researches also attempted to measure the impact of tourism on the community (e.g. Soutar and McLeod 1993; Johnson et al., 1994; Perez and Nadal 2005; and Andreck et al., 2005). It is evident that tourism can also create sustainable community development if the community is directly involved in tourism activities (Berkes, 1994; Hinshelwood, 2001; Coetzee, 2002; Abiche, 2004 and Mazilu and Iancu 2006). Additionally, it is generally agreed that a lack of participation and empowerment from the rural community in tourism, reduces the utilization of the rural resources (Hjalager, 1997; Mason and Cheyne, 2000; Sharpely, 2001 and Garrod et al., 2006). The

resources owned by the community should also be identified to understand the influence on sustainable indigenous tourism.

Apart from rural tourism, several studies have been made that specifically address the impacts of tourism on the indigenous community (e.g. Lu and Nepal, 2009; Suntikul, 2007). However, inadequate research on sustainable indigenous tourism practice creates a gap in this research area. Moreover, there are very few studies on indigenous people's participation in sustainable tourism. According to Opermann (1997), tourism still lacks a comprehensive body of knowledge and a theoretical framework.

Indigenous tourism is a type of rural tourism that allows the tourist to visit the indigenous people settlement and experience indigenous members' daily life. Indigenous tourism is the focus of this study, because it is considered as an important tool in the development of the rural community, due to the significant positive impacts to the hosts' (Hjalager, 1996). According to Deroi (1983), tourism not only allows the community to enjoy greater economic benefits, but also helps maintain the next generation of the community in the rural areas, instead of migrating to towns.

Boyle (2002) argued that the majority of the indigenous tourism studies are descriptive and mainly presented in the form of periodic reports and conference papers with several being cited in peer-reviewed journals. There are very few works that have been produced in postgraduate dissertations (Butler and Hinch, 2007). Therefore, it can be concluded that there have been no specific studies, which attempt to focus on level of community resources and community development, which influence the sustainable indigenous tourism practice. Butler and Hinch (2007) also revealed that there are clear identifiable gaps within the indigenous tourism spectrum and the academic domains that need to be addressed to strengthen the body of knowledge. To bridge this knowledge gap, the present study will investigate and measure the indigenous community's sustainability in tourism.

Even though several studies have been conducted to identify the impacts of indigenous tourism, the outcomes were only focused on the perception of the host community and the tourists. Evidence shows that very few studies have attempted to understand the important factors to run indigenous tourism business from the indigenous people's point of view in order to develop a sustainable indigenous tourism practice. Thus, it can be said that there is no attempt to create a model of sustainable indigenous tourism. Focusing on the indigenous people's perception specifically is very important, as they are the industry's key players.

Reports presented at the United Nation's 7th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues in April 2008 indicated that the rural community not only hail from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds, but also share challenges such as lack of basic healthcare, limited access to education, loss of control over land, abject poverty, displacement, human rights violations, discrimination as well as economic and social marginalization.

According to Muqbil (2009), tourism provides a wide range of opportunities to the indigenous community to address some of these challenges. Indeed, promoting indigenous tourism offers a one-stop-shop opportunity to uphold a national culture and also address broader issues such as extinction of languages, preservation of ancient wisdom as well as poverty alleviation, climate change and migration. In Malaysian context, lack of studies concentrating in ethnic tourism has been a major issue because most of the studies focussed on national level tourism (King, 2007).

The importance of local participation in tourism was also stressed in the 7th Malaysian Plan 1996–2000 (Government of Malaysia, 1996). Sungai Bumbon Cultural Village in Carey Island was chosen as the study area, because it is a well-established Malaysian, indigenous tourism destination.

The purpose of this research is also to investigate the initiative of the indigenous people in tourism activities. The Orang Asli often have unused land as well as underutilised premises such as unused houses and rooms. These ‘inactive’ assets can easily be turned into profit-making home stays. This home stay business is a flexible enterprise, unlike normal hotel establishments; it can expand and contract according to the market demands (Hjalager, 1997).

Apart from that, tourism also helps the Orang Asli community to stay together. Tourism business maintains them as a productive unit by offering work to all members, particularly to the women (Dernoi, 1983). Providing services for the tourists represents a break in the normal hunting and agricultural routine and can lead to new varied human contacts and to rise in quality of life through creation of new facilities and amenities at the residential area. The Orang Asli community also should be introduced to new programmes aimed at their deculturalization (Nicholas, 2000).

Tourism draws outside capital into the host community which then can lead to positive economic benefits. The benefits include a diversification of the local industry base, increased employment, higher incomes and better life style. However, the issue of sustainable tourism practice and its underlying factors are still unclear. This concern is evident by the number of hotels and travel agencies operated by outsiders (Lepp, 2006) in rural areas. As one of the well known indigenous tourism destinations in Malaysia, it is still questionable if sustainable practice is encouraged. Although the government has initiated home stay programmes in the Sungei Ruil area in 2009, the direct benefits from the tourism to the indigenous community is questionable. An initial naturalistic inquiry done recently in Sungei Ruil, Cameron Highlands, Pahang showed that the Semai people are not enjoying any advantages from tourism;

“Although the home stay program was a good move, we do not get any money from it...in fact, the biggest home stay in our village is being operated by an outsider...how will we get any income? We may get some money only if the tourists buy our handicrafts when they are brought here by the travel agents...” (personal communication, 28 April 2011, Batin Kadir Latif, Sungei Ruil, Cameron Highlands, 2011)

Another initial investigation done at the Kampung Sungai Bumbun at Carey Island in Selangor reveals that outsiders' influence is highly significant at the village to run the tourism activities successfully. However the community feels that their culture and tourism business has been exploited by outsiders.

"We have indigenous tour packages. It was prepared by an outsider who runs the whole business. He promotes this village. He brings in the tourists. We are very grateful that we are still getting the tourist market because of the outsider. We will be asked to perform whenever there is a tour group from abroad. However we only get little payment from our dance performance. If we can get paid directly from the tourists we can earn better living." (personal communication, 12 May 2012, Head of Tompoq Tompoh Dance group, Carey Island, 2012).

The initial investigation reveals that the empowerment, capacity building and participation of the Mah Meri people is limited by external forces. Thus the sustainability level of the indigenous people in tourism is unclear and critically questionable. Lu and Nepal (2009) say the issues of control and ownership of tourism is essential because the industry is highly politicized and globalized by outsiders. The facility development in the rural areas is generally agreed to be an important factor to attract more tourists to the region. Improvement of the attractiveness in the rural areas is essential to provide satisfactory services for tourists and improve the demand. Thus, government agencies tend to build new attractive tourism facilities in the host region. In the Mah Meri Cultural Village, there are two main tourist information centres built by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC) and Department of Orang Asli Development (JAKOA) as a centralized area for providing information and as a platform to organize cultural performances.

The host community of the Mah Meri village appreciates the efforts by the government agencies but the issue of utilization of the facilities has been raised. According to the community, the information centre of JAKOA and The Mah Meri Village Learning Centre have seldom been used since the launching of The Mah Meri Cultural Centre by the MOTAC in 2011.

"Since the new information centre was launched, the other centre is not used at all ... we only perform at the new facility nowadays. We are still in doubt on the purpose of the facilities. We can just sell our products from our house. The handicrafts displayed at the interpretation centres are the same products that we sell here (in our house). So, the centres are actually not fully utilized." (personal communication, 13 May 2012, Carver, Carey Island, 2012)

This Mah Meri village's scenario is also experienced by the indigenous community of Rh. Numbang village in Ulu Batang Ai, Sarawak. The community, which is actively involved in longhouse tourism, believes that the tourist lodge facility built by Kooperatif Serbaguna Ulu Batang Ai is seldom used and did not have any networking with the tour operator (Bratek et al., 2007). This argument proves that the empowerment

and participation of the indigenous people is also equally important in the planning and decision making stage in the process of tourism sustainability. Even though many governments throughout the world are aware that empowerment and participation is an important parameter to derive sustainable indigenous tourism, generally indigenous communities have been marginalized from tourism planning and decision making process (Lu and Nepal, 2007). This strong statement raised the need and urgency to study the participation level of the community in tourism and government-developed programs. The Selangor state government is also aware of the potential of the Mah Meri indigenous tourism. The matter was also stressed by the members of the state government advocating that the Mah Meri tourism products and culture should be marketed widely.

"At this time, we have a program where we help market aboriginal handicraft and if we want to find the source, the 'Specialty' indigenous handicrafts are at Carey Island Mah Meri among the aborigines. So there is a very intensive study of marketing carried out not only by Tourism Selangor or the State Government but also supported by Federal Government and 'Tourism Malaysia'. (Selangor State Council, 2011)

The recognition of the Selangor state government reflects the seriousness of the government in exploring and venturing into the indigenous tourism business as a community development tool. Thus, it provides clear platform to extend a holistic study on the issues regarding indigenous tourism and the hosts' perception. Regardless the external factors especially the help from government to strengthen the tourism development, the community feels their tourism is sustainable and will last forever.

"I will not leave tourism till I die because my ancestors ordered me (through dreams) to keep on carving and tell about our culture to outsiders...thus, i can say that I will still do this job even if very few tourist coming here" (personal communication, 13 May 2012, Carver, Carey Island, 2012)

The statement proves that the community is strongly attached to tourism and can be regarded as operating sustainable tourism practice rather than seasonal tourism operators. According to Roddin and Sharipah (2013) there are also other Orang asli communities actively involved in tourism especially the Jakun's as the tour guides in Endau-Rompoin National Park, the Batek's as tour guides in Kuala Terengganu. Unfortunately, their fear of destruction of customs and traditions become the main obstacle to limit tourism sustainability (Zanisah et al., 2009). Norhasmah and Husnorhafiza (2011) also argued that only two Orang Asli communities in Malaysia; Ja Hut and Mah Meri are willing to expose their culture for sustainable tourism through wood carvings. This argument has created a need to explore the factors influence the Mah Meri community to be involved in tourism in a sustainable way for a long period of time.

1.5 Research Question

Hence, the approach of the community by exposing their uniqueness as a tourism package unlike other Orang Asli communities has created the main research question; What are the factors influencing the sustainable indigenous tourism? It is also important to monitor and understand the level of community development of the Mah Meri people in the recently developed tourism programs by the government. The tourism development should also be seen as an ongoing process to achieve sustainable development for the Orang Asli community. However, the indigenous people often have negative perception that tourism would only create problems and change their culture (Bratek et. al.). Thus the research questions of this study are:

- 1) What is the status of the community resources of the Mah Meri people to attain sustainable tourism?
- 2) What are the community development dimensions that influence sustainable indigenous tourism?
- 3) What is the level of community resources, community development and sustainable indigenous tourism attainment of the Mah Meri community?
- 4) What is the relationship between the community resources and community development with sustainable indigenous tourism indicators?
- 5) What is the influence of the community resources and community development dimensions on attainment of sustainable indigenous tourism?

1.6 Research Objective

Sustainable tourism is determined to make least impact on the environment and local culture, while helping to generate future employment for local people. The aim of sustainable tourism is to ensure that development brings a positive experience for the local people, tourism companies and the tourists themselves. It is also important to monitor and understand the level of community development of the Mah Meri people in the recently developed tourism programs by the government. The tourism development should also be seen as an ongoing process to achieve sustainable development for the Orang Asli community. The general objective is to holistically understand the factors influencing the sustainable indigenous tourism practice of the Mah Meri community.

Thus the specific objectives of the research are:

- 1) To identify the community resources that will lead to sustainable indigenous tourism.
- 2) To determine the community development dimensions that influence sustainable indigenous tourism.
- 3) To measure the level of community resources, community development and sustainable indigenous tourism attainment of the Mah Meri community.
- 4) To determine the relationship between the community resources and community development with sustainable indigenous tourism indicators.

- 5) To determine the influence of the community resources and community development dimensions on attainment of sustainable indigenous tourism.

1.7 Significance of this Study

This study will benefit stakeholders within the indigenous-tourism-host involvement framework. The broad community, that will utilize the findings of this research, includes residents of host communities, natives, industry experts, governmental planners, policy makers, corporate sectors, academicians and non-governmental organizations. It is hoped that the findings of this research will contribute to existing literature in the indigenous tourism field that could enhance the sector into a more profitable business for the aborigine community. Any new factors found, which affect the Mah Meri's perception of indigenous tourism would be a unique contribution to literature on indigenous tourism. By specifically identifying the demographic profiles that influence Mah Meri's perception of indigenous tourism, the attitudes, constraints and problems of their involvement may be addressed. The newly developed scale can also be used as a tool to measure the indigenous' perception of indigenous tourism in future studies. In addition, it is anticipated that more research would be carried out on the socio economic impact of tourism to the indigenous people, which will strengthen both current and previous literatures.

1.8 Theoretical Perspectives

Johnston and Tyrrell (2006) argued that the tourism literature has failed to provide a generally accepted theoretical framework of sustainable tourism. Swarbrooke (1998) also mentioned that there is no widely accepted definition of sustainable tourism. Although there is no specific underpinning theory to address sustainable indigenous tourism, green paradigm has been the backbone for sustainable development studies. Green paradigm stresses that humans are part of nature versus the argument of dominant western environmental paradigm saying that humans are apart from nature (Weaver and Oppermann, 2000). The term sustainable development which was introduced in the Bruntland Report (1987) was influenced by green paradigm. Thus it can be concluded that initially sustainable development was heavily linked with environmental sustainability. The utilization of the green paradigm alone which is overshadowed by the environmental perspective is inadequate and other related theories of community development and tourism need to be highlighted to support the theoretical background of this study. Among the main theories underpinning tourism studies based on community development, the ones that are applied by many community-based tourism researchers are Murphy's Ecological Model, Community Attachment Theory and the Social Exchange Theory. Beeton (2006) has highlighted several theories related to community-based tourism planning and development. The branding of Murphy's Ecological Model as the mother theory by the author has proved that this model is a dominant theoretical reference for community and tourism interrelationship studies.

Murphy's Ecological Model was introduced in 1983 and this model is often used to explain the relationship between tourism and local community. The scholar consistently stressed more on the local community in comparison to the visiting community (tourists) by taking a geographical approach when discussing community. In the case of indigenous tourism, more indigenous people should be encouraged to participate in the decision-making process. Apart from Murphy's Ecological Model, to study the perception of the community members on the impact of tourism, researchers on community-based tourism commonly use the Social Exchange Theory (Andereck et al., 2005). This theory has been also used in other fields of study such as sociology, economy, and social psychology to analyze aspects of social communication and the changes that takes place within society (Wang and Pfister, 2008).

According to Homans (1961) as cited by Zafirovski (2005), exchange theory is based on the foundation that human behaviour or communal interaction is an exchange of activity, both tangible and intangible'. Social exchange theory is the systematic process in which an individual benefits from a sequence of interactions with society. In this interaction, the assessment that is given to the third party is more valuable than to be costly for the giver or vice versa. In other words, an individual creates independent interaction with society yielding a beneficial outcome, otherwise the interaction would be slack. Therefore, exchange theory scrutinizes the sequence of creation and continuity of mutual social relations or the communal indulgence among humans. The exchange theory is about individuals who create and follow social relations according to their expectations that such relations will be mutually advantageous. The initial motivation for social interaction is provided by the exchange of benefits, intrinsic and extrinsic, independent of normative obligations (Blau, 1994; Zafirovski, 2005).

In the context of this study, Mah Meri's understanding about indigenous tourism refers to the knowledge that they obtained via direct or indirect observations, information from tourists, or self-generated during the assumption process. This shows that the Social Exchange theory may explain the resident's motivation to conduct and support such an exchange in hosting indigenous tourism (Deccio and Baloglu, 2002). The perception of a community member on tourism development and his involvement is influenced by the belief that tourism would lead to certain consequences (Kalsom et al., 2008). Thus, this study will be guided by the social exchange theory to understand the nature of the field of study. However other relevant models and theories such as the Murphy's ecological model will also be used to accommodate the need of the study.

1.8.1 Research Framework

The crystallized understanding of the problem from the theoretical gaps and practical issues leads this research to the formation of objectives to be achieved. As drafted in Figure 1.3, the three components of community sources (independent variable), community development (independent variable) and sustainable indigenous tourism

(dependent variable) are used to explain how the indigenous tourism participation can influence the sustainable indigenous tourism.

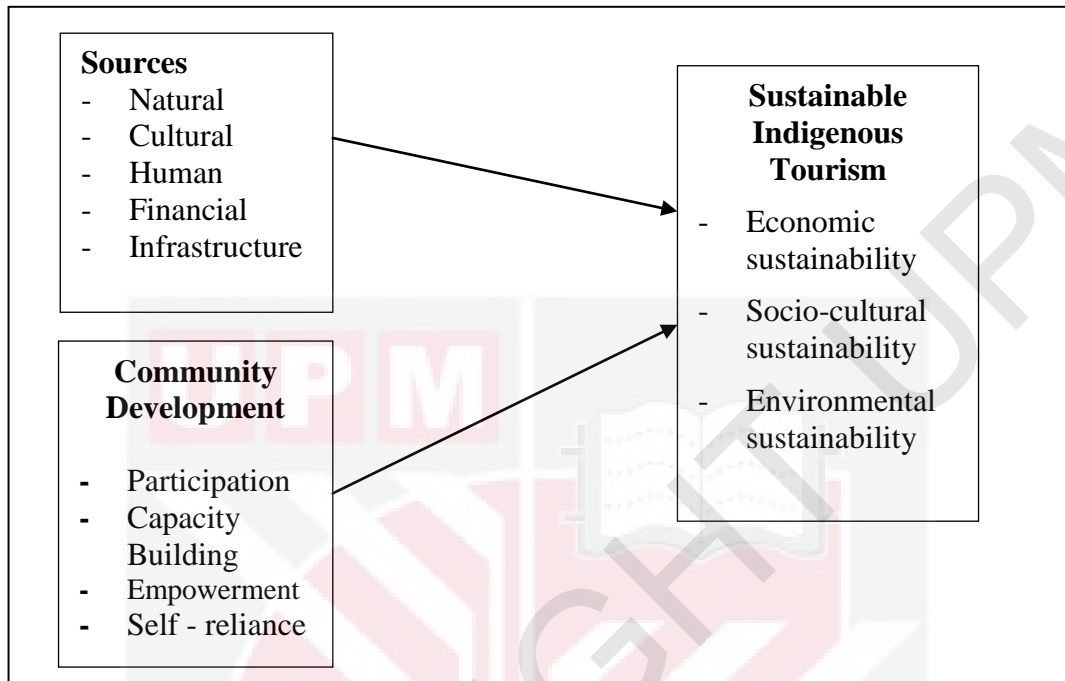


Figure 1.2: Research framework

The elements of natural, cultural, human, infrastructure and financial resources possessed by the Mah Meri are considered as the tangible community input which the community owns as community assets. The other independent variable is community development domain consist of participation, empowerment, self-reliance and capacity building. Self-reliance is achieved when the community has the ability to run the business without depending on outsiders. The community development will be measured in terms of the community in achieving community empowerment, community economic development, community wellness and community learning. Economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability are considered as the main indicators to measure the sustainable tourism practice of a community. The sustainable indigenous tourism is the dependent variable of this study.

1.9 Operational Definition of Concepts

After understanding the existing concepts from the past studies, several concepts relevant to this study need to be defined from the researchers own interpretation. These concepts are; community, participation, empowerment, community resources, indigenous tourism and sustainable tourism.

Community: Community can be generally defined as a group of people who live at the same geographical area and share common interests and cultures. For this study, the community is defined as a group of indigenous people who share a strong culture that is unique compared to outsiders. Specifically, the community selected for this study is the Mah meri community.

Participation: Participation refers to the involvement of the community in developmental programs at various stages of the process. In this study, participation is seen as a process that will attach the community to the tourism developmental programs by the government. Without the understanding and inclusion of participation, sustainable tourism is difficult to be achieved.

Empowerment: This term generally referred as a giving authority to the local community to decide their own destiny. In this study, empowerment is seen as a process that enables the indigenous community to take own decision with limited control from the government agencies. However, the scope of this study is only to understand the empowerment level and issues within the tourism development and not other types of developments.

Community resources: Community resources are the existing community assets that can be used to develop a community. For the purpose of this study, community resources is defined as the cultural, natural, infrastructure, human and financial resources that will be the existing strength of the indigenous community to achieve sustainable indigenous tourism.

Indigenous tourism: Indigenous tourism in this study is referred to a type of tourism that provides economic and non-economic benefits to the indigenous community primarily by highlighting their unique culture to the outsiders.

Sustainable tourism: Generally sustainable tourism is known as the tourism that is operated without compromising future generation's interest. In this study, sustainable tourism is regarded as a type of soft tourism that will not only generate profits to community but also allows the tourists to appreciate the culture of the unique community.

1.10 Organization of Thesis

This thesis is organized into five different Chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Review of related literature, (3) Research methods, (4) Data analysis and (5) Discussions and conclusions. The first chapter briefly introduces the study and the purpose of the research. It also clarifies research questions/objectives and the terms used as a guide throughout the study. The second chapter expands the literature of each topic within indigenous tourism, which has both direct and indirect links with indigenous tourism. The interdisciplinary concepts are examined to gain a better understanding of the indigenous tourism sector throughout the study. It also conceptualizes a model that will be proposed for testing. Chapter 3 describes the methods to be utilized in pursuing this research. It discusses the study area, sample selection, data collection procedure, the survey

instrument development - and how the data was analyzed. The fourth chapter reports the results obtained from the empirical study. The results of hypothesis testing will also be discussed in the second section of this chapter. The fifth chapter will give an overall summary, including contributions and recommendations. Study limitations will also be discussed in the final chapter. Figure 1.5 below shows the overall research process, which will be discussed in the following chapters.

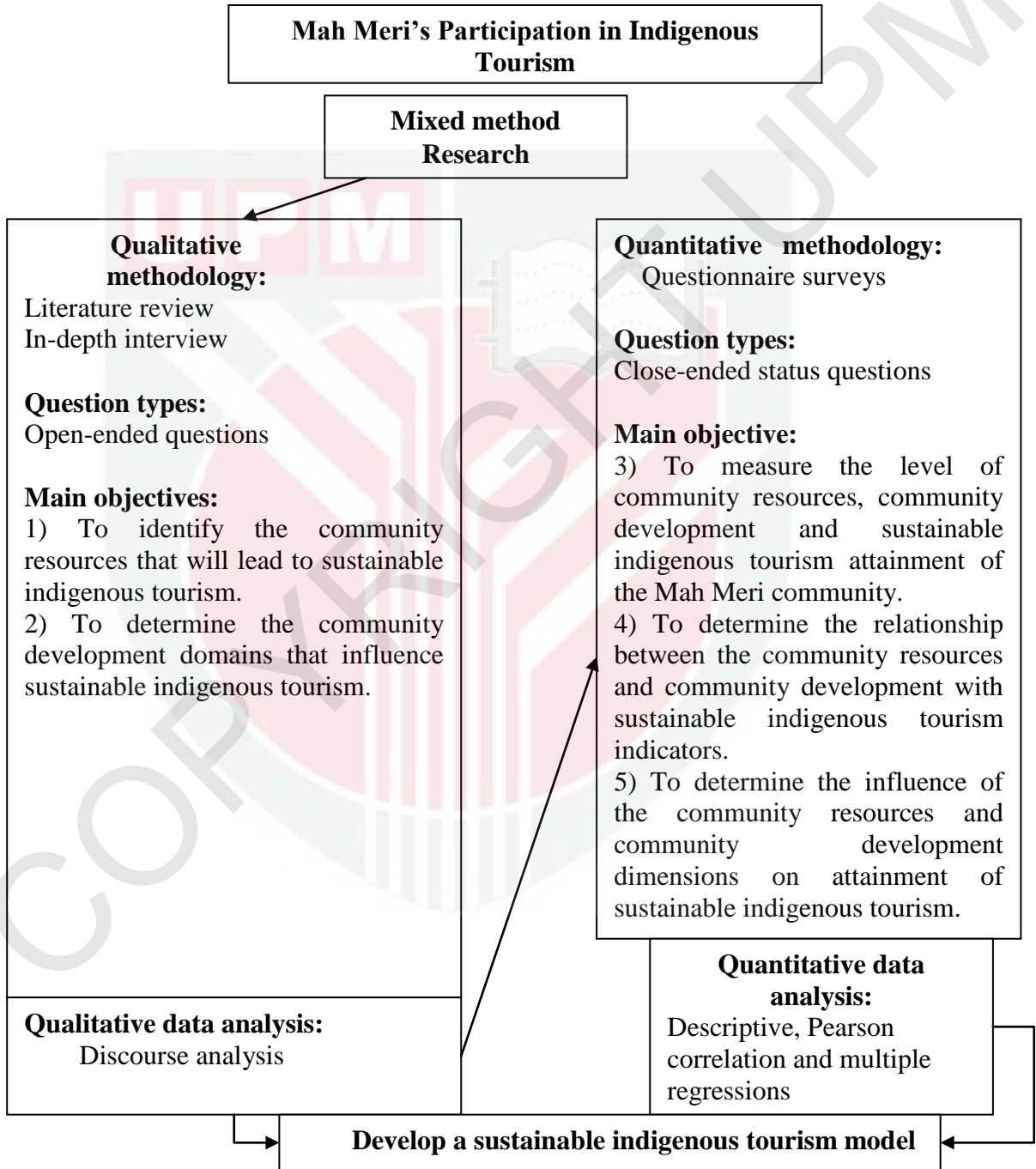


Figure 1.3: Research Process

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

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