



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***DIMENSIONS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PLANNING FOR
SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN KUALA GANDAH, PAHANG, MALAYSIA***

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By

ARNI ABDUL GANI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fullfillments of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

May 2016

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2016

Chairman : Associate Professor Khairil Wahidin Awang, PhD
Faculty : Economics and Management

Participation by the public in the decision making process and in the planning stages is regarded as one of the principles of sustainable tourism. Public participation in planning is important because it can have significant impacts on the projects and programs developed in an area especially tourism development in a natural environment. Protected area, in this study the National Elephant Conservation Centre (NECC) in Kuala Gandah is gaining its popularity as one of the famous attractions in Malaysia. An increasing number of tourists to the area demands a better approach to manage tourism development to ensure sustainability. As custodians to the NECC, Department of Wildlife and National Park (DWNP) needs to take proactive steps to embrace the concept of sustainable tourism. This can be done by actively involving the public in the planning of tourism in the area. However, the main problem with public participation is less or no involvement of the public in the decision making due to various reasons and barriers. While many researches has focused on determining the barriers to participation, it is equally important to understand the factors that will predict public participation. The goal of this study is to determine the important attributes and dimensions of public participation in protected area. The study began with an assessment of the current approaches used in public participation in Malaysia from the view of the experts in the identified field. Then, the identification and verification of attributes conducted to establish what attributes and dimensions will predict the public to participate in sustainable tourism planning in Malaysia context.

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase employed a Delphi Technique to gather data from the experts in the field. The study utilized experts in the field of public participation, forestry and tourism management. As a result, forty attributes were found to be important in determining public participation in Malaysia. These attributes were found to be consistent with the findings from the literature. In addition to the existing attributes from the literature, four new attributes emerged from the Delphi exercise. They were opportunities to be present at meetings should be given to all people concerned, the content of reports and documents should

be written in easy to understand language, management should establish rapport with the locals and dialogue sessions should be done more frequently and properly scheduled. The result also revealed lacking and weaknesses in the current approaches used by the government in facilitating the participation process.

These findings were then used to developed questionnaire for survey conducted at NECC in Pahang. The purpose of the survey was for results verification as well as to generate more convincing findings of the overall study. A total of 413 respondents representing key actors and local community were sampled for this survey. The responses from the key actors and the local community were then tested using Principal component analysis to determine the number of dimensions and the relevancy of each attribute within these dimensions. It was found that only twenty attributes retained based on the recommended loading values. They were grouped into four dimensions; namely situation specific, process 1 – interest oriented, process 2 – participant responsibility and product. A Multiple linear regression was performed to examine which dimensions are the strongest predictor of participation. Major findings from the result revealed two dimensions; situation specific and process 1- interest oriented were the strongest predictors of public participation in planning for tourism in Kuala Gandah. This result indicates that attention to specific issues faced by the public in planning efforts will eventually enhance the public involvement and facilitate cooperation in collaborative efforts. In addition, the process of public participation need to be conducted and managed with consideration of the public interest to ensure their effective participation.

The study has able to indicate the factors that can enhance public participation in Malaysia with reference to protected area. Hopefully, the generated attributes and dimensions will be used by the relevant authorities to encourage the public in participatory effort.

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

**DIMENSI PENGLIBATAN MASYARAKAT DALAM PERANCANGAN
PELANCONGAN YANG LESTARI DI KUALA GANDAH, PAHANG,
MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Mei 2016

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Penglibatan masyarakat dalam proses membuat keputusan serta dalam peringkat perancangan dianggap sebagai salah satu prinsip pelancongan lestari. Penglibatan masyarakat dalam perancangan adalah penting kerana ia boleh mempunyai kesan yang besar ke atas projek-projek dan program-program yang dibangunkan terutama pembangunan pelancongan di persekitaran semulajadi. Di dalam kajian ini, kawasan yang dilindungi, iaitu Pusat Konservasi Gajah Kebangsaan (PKGK) Kuala Gandah telah semakin popular sebagai salah satu tarikan pelancong yang terkenal di Malaysia. Peningkatan jumlah pelancong ke kawasan ini memerlukan pendekatan yang lebih baik bagi memastikan pembangunan pelancongan yang lestari. Jabatan Perlindungan Hidupan Liar dan Taman Negara (PERHILITAN) perlu mengambil langkah proaktif untuk memastikan konsep pelancongan yang lestari dapat diamalkan. Ini boleh dilakukan dengan melibatkan masyarakat dalam perancangan pelancongan di kawasan tersebut. Masalah utama dalam penglibatan masyarakat ialah kurang atau tiada Penglibatan masyarakat dalam membuat keputusan kerana pelbagai sebab dan halangan. Banyak kajian telah dijalankan yang memberi tumpuan kepada mengenalpasti halangan kepada penglibatan masyarakat. Namun, turut penting ialah pemahaman terhadap ciri-ciri yang akan meramalkan penglibatan masyarakat. Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti ciri-ciri penting dan dimensi penglibatan masyarakat dalam perancangan pelancongan di kawasan terlindung. Kajian ini bermula dengan penilaian daripada pakar-pakar dalam bidang yang dikenalpasti terhadap pendekatan semasa yang digunapakai dalam penglibatan masyarakat di Malaysia. Setelah itu, kajian diteruskan dengan tujuan pengesahan terhadap ciri-ciri ini bagi mengenalpasti apakah ciri-ciri dan dimensi akan dapat meramalkan penglibatan masyarakat dalam perancangan pelancongan yang lestari dalam konteks Malaysia.

Kajian ini dijalankan dalam dua fasa. Fasa pertama mengunapakai Teknik Delphi untuk mengumpul data dari pakar-pakar dalam bidang yang dikenalpasti. Pakar-pakar yang terlibat dalam kajian ini ialah pakar dari bidang penglibatan masyarakat,

perhutanan dan pengurusan pelancongan. Hasil kajian mendapati empat puluh faktor didapati penting dalam menentukan penglibatan masyarakat di Malaysia. Ciri-ciri ini telah didapati selaras dengan penemuan dari kajian literatur. Selain daripada ciri-ciri yang sedia ada, empat ciri-ciri baru muncul daripada pelaksanaan Teknik Delphi iaitu peluang untuk hadir di mesyuarat hendaklah diberikan kepada semua orang yang berkenaan, kandungan laporan dan dokumen hendaklah ditulis dalam bahasa yang mudah untuk difahami, pengurusan perlu mewujudkan hubungan baik dengan penduduk tempatan dan sesi dialog perlu dilakukan lebih kerap dan berjadual. Hasil kajian juga mendedahkan kekurangan dan kelemahan dalam pendekatan semasa yang digunakan oleh kerajaan dalam memudahkan proses penglibatan masyarakat di Malaysia.

Hasil dari fasa pertama ini kemudiannya digunakan dalam pembangunan soal selidik yang dijalankan di Pusat Konservasi Gajah Kebangsaan (PKGK) di Pahang. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk pengesahan hasil dari Teknik Delphi dan juga bagi mendapatkan hasil kajian yang lebih meyakinkan. Seramai 413 responden yang mewakili individu berperanan utama dan masyarakat tempatan dipilih sebagai sampel kajian ini. Data dari individu berperanan utama dan masyarakat setempat kemudiannya diuji dengan menggunakan Analisis Komponen Utama untuk menentukan bilangan dimensi dan kesesuaian setiap ciri-ciri dalam setiap dimensi ini. Dua puluh ciri-ciri telah dikekalkan berdasarkan nilai yang disyorkan. Ciri-ciri ini telah dikumpulkan ke dalam empat dimensi; iaitu keadaan tertentu, proses 1 – berorientasi kepentingan, proses 2 - tanggungjawab peserta dan produk. Regresi Linear Berganda telah dijalankan untuk mengkaji dimensi peramal yang kuat bagi penglibatan masyarakat. Hasil kajian menunjukkan dua dimensi; keadaan tertentu dan proses 1- berorientasi kepentingan ialah peramal kuat penglibatan masyarakat dalam perancangan untuk pelancongan di Kuala Gandah. Ini menunjukkan bahawa perhatian terhadap isu-isu khusus yang dihadapi oleh masyarakat di dalam usaha-usaha perancangan pelancongan akan meningkatkan penglibatan masyarakat dan memudahkan usaha-usaha kerjasama. Selain itu, proses penglibatan masyarakat dalam perancangan pelancongan perlu dijalankan dan diuruskan dengan pertimbangan yang wajar terhadap kepentingan masyarakat bagi memastikan penglibatan mereka yang efektif.

Kajian ini telah menunjukkan ciri-ciri yang boleh meningkatkan penglibatan masyarakat di Malaysia dengan merujuk kepada penglibatan mereka dalam perancangan pelancongan di kawasan yang dilindungi. Adalah diharapkan, ciri-ciri dan dimensi yang dikenalpasti akan dapat digunakan oleh pihak-pihak berkuasa yang berkaitan untuk menggalakkan penglibatan masyarakat.

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Thank you and may **ALLAH** bless us all.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 12 May 2016 to conduct the final examination of Arni binti Abdul Gani on her thesis entitled "Dimensions of Public Participation in Planning for Sustainable Tourism in Kuala Gandah, Pahang, Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
<i>df</i>	Degree of Freedom
DWNP	Department of Wildlife and National Park
EEU	Environmental Evaluation Unit
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
F	Fisher's F Ratio
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
IUCN	International Union of Conservation of Nature
JAKOA	Department of Orang Asli Malaysia
JKKK	Village Development and Security Committee
<i>M</i>	Mean (arithmetic average)
MOTAC	Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia
MSA	Measure of Sampling Adequacy
MTC	Malaysian Timber Council
NECC	National Elephant Conservation Centre
NPP	National Physical Plan
NRE	Ministry of National Resources and Environment Malaysia
NUP	National Urbanization Plan
OSCE	Organizations for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<i>p</i>	Probability
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PKGK	Pusat Konservasi Gajah Kebangsaan
<i>R</i>	Multitple correlation

SCRA	Society of Community Research and Action
<i>SD</i>	Standard deviation
<i>SE</i>	Standard error
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
<i>VAR</i>	Variance
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WTO	World Tourism Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the background of this research. It details the importance and validity of the research, as well as outlines the objectives. The literature review covers the statement of problems, research questions, specific objectives, and the significance of the study to the relevant authorities. Operational definitions are also presented in this chapter.

1.2 General Background

The natural environment is seen as an important tourism resource that has the ability to attract millions of visitors every year. Natural environment generally refers to the physical environment, which comprises both biophysical and human-made elements (Dowling, 2003). Both of these elements play a significant role in making the environment attractive. Engaging in outdoor recreation in the natural environment is commonly recognised as the major purpose of leisure travel (Gunn, 1979), while the natural settings and the recreation opportunities provided can be major tourist attractions (Rosenow & Pulsipher, 1979). Today, recreation is recognized as an important non-forest service for the modern societies (Bartczak, Englin, & Pang, 2012) where people can enjoy direct contact with the forests in various activities. The central part of the tourism experience usually relates to leisure and recreational activities (Dowling, 2003). However, people may travel for other reasons, such as for pleasure or business. Currently, many of the natural environments are being designated as protected areas with the goal to conserve nature's beauty for biological preservation, and for human appreciation. Thus, many of these protected areas are now becoming major attractions to tourists.

Protected areas are established to protect, conserve, and control the natural environments. These efforts could specifically contribute to the conservation of biodiversity (Svajda, 2011). These protected areas often have specific objectives, and are categorized according to their goals of establishment. The International Union of Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines protected areas as "geographical spaces, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values" (International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN], 2008). Despite their conservation moves, many of these protected areas have opened their doors for visitors, which eventually promote tourism.

The interaction between tourism and conservation is often seen as symbiotic (Budowski, 1976; Puhakka, 2008). Support and political pressure for the creation of protected areas may grow, while more and more people visit national parks and start

to appreciate them (Eagles & McCool, 2002). The rapid growth of international travel today has resulted in the increased demand for better facilities and services at tourism destinations. This puts pressure on the management to come up with better planning and management to meet tourists' expectations and demands. The increasing number of visitors would then increase the requirement for new recreational activities. Thus, the development of different kinds of services and facilities in the parks (Puhakka, 2008), such as better infrastructures including trails, bridges, and lodges would also increase. Since tourism will be one of the largest industries in the 21st century (Dowling, 2003), it is imperative to give greater attention to planning and managing of parks and protected areas, which has raised the stakes for decisions on tourism planning in the protected areas (McCool, 2009). One of the major concerns in planning for tourism in protected areas relates to the issue of sustainable development of its resources.

Sustainability expresses the idea that people must live within the capacity of their environment to support them, which is important to consider, especially in the tourism industry, as the industry depends on the maintenance of the environmental qualities (Piagram, 2000). Because natural environments, such as parks and protected areas are now open to the public, issues related to adopting the correct ways towards sustainable development have become crucial. One of the concepts of sustainable development is that it requires a collective action where inputs from all parties involved, and those affected by the development projects must be considered. Relating to this, public participation in planning and management of the tourism area is recognized as one of the principles of sustainable tourism (Hall, 2000; Harper, 1997; Swarbrooke, 2002). Public participation is deemed important, and can have significant impacts on the projects and programmes developed in a particular area.

Despite the importance of public participation in planning and management of natural environments, local knowledge and traditional values are often ignored in sustainable decisions (Moisey & McCool, 2008) compared to the knowledge of experts, which are regarded as more valid and credible in the decision-making process (Shirley, Nair, & Ascroft, 1995). Local knowledge is not properly sourced and taken into consideration in decision-making process due to certain issues, such as the validity of the knowledge for the current situation at hand. Nakashima and Roue (2002) reported that when the issue of indigenous knowledge is discussed, the discussion will often circle around the validity and scientific aspects of the knowledge, whether it is based on some empirical evidences or mere superstitions. Thus, in many occasions, the public, which includes indigenous people are denied the rights to share their knowledge and voice their concerns during the decision-making process. It is important to understand that local knowledge holds substantial importance towards any country's knowledge system as it encompasses the skills, experience, and insights of the people. Local knowledge is often applied to maintain and improve the livelihood of the people. Therefore, it must be integrated into planning and development plans to ensure that the public interests are not overlooked. The public must also be given adequate access to participate in planning especially during the decision-making process.

Even though public participation has always been the subject of interest, its application in reality is just rhetoric. It has been argued that even if proper planning is undertaken by the governments or their agencies, the intended plans are not always implemented (Marzuki, Hay, & James, 2012). This happens especially in developing countries where tourism plans are usually prepared by the central authorities, and are also largely market-driven. Such plans usually fail to consider local issues, and to provide opportunities for proper consultation with the local communities (Tosun, 2000; Tosun & Timothy, 2003; Wall & Mathieson, 2006). Due to the complexity of attracting people to participate in the planning and management of projects in natural areas, and due to the urgency to ensure the implementation of sustainable development in such areas, it is important to thoroughly understand the factors that could predict public participation. Public rapport is needed to achieve greater understanding on ecological concepts and principles, and to encourage meaningful and serious discourse between stakeholders (McCool & Guthrie, 2001). Moreover, current planning and management of natural environments must ensure that the social science data, such as intentions and perceptions of an issue, are linked to biological and physical science information if the planners are to recognise the complex, and interactive roles that humans play in natural systems (Bright, Cordell, Anne, & Tarrant, 2003).

It is believed that the knowledge obtained through the linkages of information would provide greater understanding for the managers when making decisions. Apart from that, it provides the understanding on the extensiveness of human interaction with the natural world (Shirley et al., 1995). The management of the protected areas relies on the partnership between the authoritative agencies and local community through collaboration, which can only be established through understanding of the needs and wants of each party. Sharing of roles and power is crucial, thus this requires input from the public during decision-making process. Therefore, the management of the protected areas should investigate the positive and negative factors that could lead to true and authentic participation. Such investigation will provide better understanding of the aspects that will have significant importance in ensuring that the public participation practice will work towards achieving the goal of sustainability.

1.3 Statement of Problems

It is fully acknowledged that public participation is an important concept in sustainability management in protected areas. However, despite of this understanding, authentic public participation is still hard to be actualized, especially in many developing countries due to numerous reasons and barriers. For example, Aref and Gill (2010), and Braun (2008) have listed the barriers towards participation by the public, which include lack of motivation by the management, inadequate resources at community level, low level of awareness among the community, and apathy. These barriers pose significant threats towards establishing effective public involvement in the decision-making process in tourism development. McCool (2009), and McCool and Guthrie (2001) argued that planning and management of protected areas now require a special approach where the planning and management must not only consider the technicality and science elements, but other elements as well, such as social, economic, and institutional considerations of the public. Burton (1993) reported that the effective management of public involvement is critical in designing constructive

change processes. He argued that the management of protected areas must possess knowledge of the theory as well as the nature of public involvement. This necessitates the stakeholders, including the government and its agencies, to take measurable actions to increase knowledge of the theory, including the human dimensions of participation (McCoy, Krumpe, & Cowles, 1994). This step is crucial, especially in planning for the development of natural areas that involves people's lifestyle, norms, cultures, and beliefs. Historically, any changes made to natural areas will create conflicts, and these conflicts can only be mitigated when the parties involved arrive at common goals and achieve consensus over decisions made.

In Malaysia, park and recreation planning has always focused on the activities provided at the park. Such planning has been top-down with administrators, planners, developers, and politicians playing key roles in deciding what should be provided (Marzuki, 2009; Wong, 1995). The top-down approach in planning is known as rational comprehensive planning. This process is a planning theory, developed to provide a systematic reproducible process for identifying desired futures in planning and the pathways to achieve them (McCool, 2009). The process is developed to remove politics from governmental decision-making by having "neutral" experts on board. The bias in decisions could be avoided in the presence of these experts (McCool & Patterson, 2000). The public is often welcomed to give inputs or be consulted upon. However, the extent to whether their inputs are being considered or how extensive they are being consulted on the plan is not known. It is believed that neglecting the community's rights in forestry and tourism planning can potentially inflict negative attitudes and behaviours among the community, and has become a reason for social conflicts (Kusumanto & Sirait, 2010).

It has been argued that many developing countries are moving towards providing opportunities for public input and stakeholder involvement in planning. However, this practice seldom occurs (Wall & Mathieson, 2006). One of the obvious reasons for this is that the effort to strike a balance between democratic participation and administrative efficiency often pose a challenge for many governments (United Nations Institute for Training and Research [UNITAR], 2012). In developing countries, the practicality of public participation in tourism planning does not seem to be seriously considered (Tosun, 2000). For instance, the governments in many developing countries often fail to examine the relevant socio-cultural, economical, and political conditions of the destination prior to planning for public participation process. These conditions should be examined and considered because they determine whether the public will participate (ibid, p. 613), and whether true participation will be a success for the developing countries.

Participation practice is not a new issue in Malaysia, but not enough researches have been conducted to explore its potential. It can be argued that the current situation with true participation practice in Malaysia is still under discussion. Apart from the Government's initiatives to incorporate public opinions in the decision-making process, true participation is still almost non-existence. Cheuk, Liew-Tsonis, Ing, and Razali (2010) reported that in Malaysia, public input is a mere tokenism in nature. The public are being informed of what is going on in their communities, but that is all.

Further consultation normally does not occur. Sharina, Hood, and Mustafa (2011), and Dola and Dolbani (2006) further stressed that local community's participation and public involvement in conservation moves in Malaysia, especially in resource management, needs the urgent attention from all parties involved. Currently, many government agencies in Malaysia are not proactive in ensuring that true participation occurs, especially during the decision-making process.

In many instances, the lack of knowledge on what public participation really means, and the lack of understanding of the issues at hand hinder the efforts towards creating awareness and interest among the public to participate. In addition, government dominance during public hearing and ineffective public participation techniques were also found to hinder public participation in Malaysia. It can be concluded that the issues with encouraging true participation in Malaysia relies on both the public and the authorities. The public needs to acquire adequate knowledge and information for them to participate, while the authority must attempt to provide a more efficient and effective public participation process.

In relation to Kuala Gandah, tourism is seen as an important industry in the area. Since the establishment of National Elephant Conservation Centre (NECC) as an ecotourism attraction by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC) and Department of Wildlife and National Park (DWNP) in 2000, the centre has received thousands of visitors and the numbers keep rising. The centre was also recognized as an ecotourism initiative under the East Coast Economic Region (ECER) master plan, with plans to establish the centre as a world class conservation site (Rahman, Hashim, Aziz, & Md. Khalid, 2012). The centre has transformed into a tourist attraction since 2000 with more facilities and infrastructure developments. According to the planning and development report by NECC, future developments include upgrading the centre with visitor oriented services and facilities, such as nature trails and visitor centre (Pusat Konservasi Gajah Kebangsaan, [PKGK], 2011). The local community residing in Kuala Gandah and Lanchang have also benefited from the flow of visitors. Many of them have ventured into tourism-related businesses, such as providing homestays, bed and breakfast, car rental services, and food and beverages shops. According to a media interview, tourism is viewed as having the potential to contribute economically, and encourage infrastructure development for the residence (Mahmood, 2008).

A proper practice of public participation is important in protected areas, such as Kuala Gandah to ensure a sustainable development of the area. Collaboration between the public and the authority in matters relating to protected areas' planning and development is crucial to ensure that the resources are being utilized sustainably. However, according to the management, there are no records of any collaboration or even public meetings ever made, especially on issues pertaining the planning and development of tourism in NECC (Nasharuddin Othman, personal communication, April 5, 2012). The head of village or community representatives are usually invited to meetings or courses on elephant care and management as some of the villagers are employed as elephant trainers. The absence of any efforts to coordinate any kind of public participation in this area should be taken seriously. With the increasing popularity of the NECC as an ecotourism site in Malaysia, there is a crucial need to

ensure that development will not jeopardize its resources. With the rising population and activities in the park, there is a definite pressure on its resources as well as on the quality of visitors' experiences, with the possibility to exceed carrying capacity (Rahman et al., 2010). Collaboration between the NECC management and the public in the area will encourage a transformation of values, practices, and overall behaviours. This transformation can contribute towards better planning and management practices in natural resource utilization and governance to ensure sustainability. This is important because true participation at the decision-making stage would hold substantial connotation towards better planning and management of protected areas, which cannot be overlooked (Martin, 2000). Thus, a thorough understanding on the attributes that can affect public participation must be investigated. Such study should include quantitative analyses of the attributes that affect public participation, especially at the decision-making process of planning sustainable tourism in protected areas. An analysis of the attributes is also required to see how these attributes perform under local settings and conditions, and eventually the strongest predictor of public participation would emerge.

1.4 Research Questions

Keeping the above questions in mind, this research was conducted to probe into the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are the experts' opinions on the current public participation practices in protected areas?
- RQ2. Do the current approaches indicate success in public participation?
- RQ3. What are the important attributes for public participation?
- RQ4. What are the dimensions that contribute to public participation?
- RQ5. Which of these dimensions is the most significant to predict public participation?

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to determine the dimensions that can predict public participation, which inherently would predict their participation in planning for a sustainable tourism in protected areas.

The specific objectives posited for this study were as follows:

1. To assess whether the current practice of public participation is a success.
2. To examine the different attributes that are considered important to public participation when planning a sustainable tourism in protected areas.
3. To factor these attributes into the dimensions of public participation.
4. To examine the most significant dimensions in predicting public participation when planning a sustainable tourism in protected areas.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study aimed to determine the important attributes and dimensions of public participation when planning for tourism in protected areas in Malaysia. This study was conducted in two phases; the first phase was to elicit important attributes, which provided the baseline information on the dimensions of public participation in protected areas in Malaysia. The second phase was designed to examine the most significant dimensions to predict public participation, in a chosen protected area in Pahang.

1.6.1 Academic Perspectives

This research can contribute towards enriching the body of knowledge by identifying the dimensions that are considered important in making public participation a success. Since participation by the public can be hugely diversified and varied based on personal, cultural, environmental, and structural circumstances (Brodie et al., 2009), this study hoped to contribute towards understanding such participation from the Malaysian perspectives. This study aimed to provide an understanding into what constitutes a public involvement in the planning process and how the dimensions of participation could help maximize the relationships among stakeholders.

The research design was conducted in two stages, with two techniques involved. The first stage utilized the Delphi Technique where data were gathered from a panel of experts in the identified field. The second part of the research was a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire survey was used to verify the data regarding the attributes and dimensions of public participation.

1.6.2 Perspectives of Policy Maker

This study offered several discrete actions to improve the existing approach in developing public participation in the decision-making process in Malaysian protected areas. Based on these actions, the dimensions that should be considered towards developing effective public participation will be justified. The findings of this research will also provide some useful and workable frameworks for the success of public participation in a local context. The Government, policy makers, and tourism planners may find the findings of this research useful when planning a people-centred and socially sound tourism development in natural environments.

1.6.3 Perspectives of Protected Area Authority – Department of Wildlife and National Park (DWNP) Peninsular Malaysia and Department of Wildlife and National Park (DWNP) Kuala Gandah

This study had focused on the DWNP of Peninsular Malaysia and the DWNP of Kuala Gandah, which is the management authority for the National Elephant Conservation Centre, Kuala Gandah (NECC). The centre, which is located in Lanchang, is a part of the Krau Wildlife Reserve in Pahang. Its main focus is to locate and translocate

elephants. Apart from its main objective of protecting the elephants, this centre is also recognized as a popular eco-tourism destination in Malaysia. The authorities of this centre would benefit from this study because the findings proposed the dimensions that are critical in determining the creation and success of public participation in Kuala Gandah.

This research has determined the important elements that affect the public, the local community as well as other key players in planning. Ultimately, it can be used by the authority to encourage the public to participate in future planning. Moreover, the authority would also benefit in terms of having relevant guides while carrying out their duties. Such roles include encouraging leadership among the local community, helping them to organize, and facilitate interactions between the stakeholders and the local community. These interactions will eventually encourage and mediate collaborations between the authority and the local community. Additionally, effective management of public involvement is imperative in addressing the changes faced by the natural environments. Therefore, the dimensions that have evolved from this research would certainly contribute towards understanding the conditions that will create lasting relationships among the stakeholders.

1.6.4 Perspectives of the Public

This research attempted to uncover the dimensions that are important, for the public in Kuala Gandah, specifically, and in Malaysia generally. The context of this research would give a huge opportunity for the key participants in planning groups (the local community, Village Development and Security Committee (JKKK), the DWNP management staff, and Non-Governmental Organizations) to indicate which dimensions are important to them, and which dimensions should be considered by the authority in creating effective public participation. In a much broader context, the findings of this research would have a substantial impact on public involvement and planning considerations in the future because it is recognized that public-held knowledge is just as important as scientific information when it comes to planning for a sustainable tourism in protected areas.

In Malaysia, public participation in decision-making process is not a new concept. The public is expected to participate; however, in many cases, the extent of their participation is limited and is of “tokenism” in nature. Participation by the public is often hindered by many reasons, from the contexts of both the public and the authority. Numerous studies have examined the barriers to public participation, yet, not many have tried to explore the opportunities for public participation in the Malaysian context. The quest to establish and effectively manage a true and authentic public participation would require knowledge on two conditions; one that will create conflicts and one that will promote good relationships between the stakeholders. Thus, a bottom-up approach is essential in realizing the goal of sustainable tourism in protected areas. However, authentic participation in the decision-making process is substantial towards encouraging sustainable development of natural resources for tourism use. This can be done by creating more opportunities for them to participate and to understand what attributes encourage public participation.

1.7 Operational Definitions

The following are the definitions of the key words used throughout this study, and the measurement of these key terms.

Dimensions of public participation: This construct contains attributes that can be used to predict the public's intentions to participate in tourism planning. In this study, two dimensions were found to be significant when predicting public participation, which were process-interest oriented, and situation specific.

Key actors: These individuals either hold important positions in the organization or are recognized individuals in the local community. These key actors would include the employees of the government agencies, employees in the non-governmental agencies, academicians in public universities, the *Penghulu* (Head of village), and the representatives from the local community.

Public: This is the group of individuals in the community that is affected by the development that is taking place in the area.

Public participation: This situation is indicated by the government's effort to consult and include the public in the decision-making process. The goal is to achieve better and acceptable decisions related to the development of a natural area.

Sustainable development: This concept aims to encourage development that will benefit the current generation, and will not jeopardize the ability of the future generations to enjoy it too.

Sustainable tourism: This tourism development concept attempts to control the effect of progress on the environment, and encourage the conservation of biodiversity and local culture. It is designed to help generate income, provide employment, and conserve the natural ecosystems. Public participation has been recognized as one of the crucial principle in sustainable tourism development. In this study, the focus was to examine the dimensions of public participation.

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