



***LOCAL COMMUNITY'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS ECOTOURISM
ACTIVITIES AT BAGAN SUNGAI BURUNG, BAGAN DATUK, PERAK***

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**LOCAL COMMUNITY'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS ECOTOURISM
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**A Project Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Bachelor of Park and Recreation Science in the
Faculty of Forestry
Universiti Putra Malaysia**

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DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to:

Universiti Putra Malaysia, my second home in Malaysia.

Faculty of Forestry; had given me the golden opportunity to complete my final year project with all the resources required.

My academic advisor, Dr. Mohd Hafizal bin Ismail, who always give me useful advises in my whole university life.

Seniors; had given their patient on the paper work in order to teach me things that I do not understand.

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My friends, whom encouraged me and pushed me to go beyond my limits.

All the people in my life that I met who touched my heart.

Thank you for everything.

I dedicate this report.

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to understand local community's perception towards ecotourism activities at Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Datuk, Perak and to identify the factors influencing local community to participate in the development of sustainable ecotourism activities at Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Datuk, Perak. The research instruments used were questionnaires and face to face interviews with the head of each village. A total number of 200 local communities were chosen to be the respondent for this study. The study found that majority of the respondents in Bagan Sungai Burung involved in ecotourism activities either as a part timer or a full timer. The reasons for them to involve in ecotourism activities are: gaining new experiences, acquiring better source of income, spending their leisure time and improving skills and interests of individuals. With regard to perception, their agency manager believed that the development of ecotourism activities has positive impacts on their local communities. Overall, from the perspective of agency manager, the ecotourism activities at Bagan Sungai Burung has positive impact and is successful to both tourists and local communities. Nonetheless, collaboration and networking with government and private organizations are still needed to further improve the development of ecotourism activities.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan utama kajian ini adalah untuk memahami persepsi masyarakat tempatan terhadap aktiviti ekopelancongan di Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Datuk, Perak dan mengenal pasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi komuniti tempatan untuk menyertai pembangunan aktiviti ekopelancongan yang berkekalan di Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Datuk, Perak . Instrumen kajian yang digunakan adalah soal selidik dan temu ramah dengan ketua setiap kampung. Sejumlah 200 komuniti tempatan dipilih sebagai responden untuk kajian ini. Kajian mendapati bahawa majoriti responden di Bagan Sungai Burung terlibat dalam aktiviti ekopelancongan sama ada sebagai pemasa bahagian atau pemasa penuh. Sebab-sebab bagi mereka untuk terlibat dalam aktiviti ekopelancongan adalah: memperoleh pengalaman baru, memperoleh sumber pendapatan yang lebih baik, menghabiskan masa lapang mereka dan meningkatkan kemahiran dan kepentingan individu. Berkenaan dengan persepsi, pengurus agensi mereka percaya bahawa pembangunan aktiviti ekopelancongan mempunyai kesan positif terhadap komuniti tempatan mereka. Secara keseluruhan, dari perspektif pengurus agensi, aktiviti ekopelancongan di Bagan Sungai Burung mempunyai kesan positif dan berjaya kepada kedua-dua pelancong dan masyarakat setempat. Walau bagaimanapun, kerjasama dan rangkaian dengan organisasi kerajaan dan swasta masih diperlukan untuk terus meningkatkan pembangunan aktiviti ekopelancongan.

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APPROVAL SHEET

I certify that this research project report entitled **Local Community's Perception towards Ecotourism Activities at Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Datuk, Perak** by Lau Jia Xin has been examined and approved as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Parks and Recreation in the Faculty of Forestry, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TIES The International Ecotourism Society

WHO World Health Organization



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ecotourism in Malaysia

Malaysia is popularly known as one of the main ecotourism destination in Asia. This statement can be proved as Malaysia is fully covered with a wealth diversity of flora and fauna where most of the habitats are protected by the national park system of Malaysia (Holidaygogogo Tours Sdn Bhd, 2018). According to Explorer Malaysia website (2013), a consistent growing rate of travellers or tourist are looking for destinations and programs or activities that involve nature-based elements with minimum impact to the earth. Therefore, ecotourism has become the fastest growing sector in the tourism industry and it is expected to grow at an annual rate of 4.3% until 2017.

Malaysia also stands as a strong ecotourism country because it is a perfect destination for eco-tourists, honeymooners, bird lovers and nature enthusiasts alike to spend their leisure time here. In addition, Malaysia offers those eco tours that mainly aim to broaden conservation awareness among the public as ecotourism continues to bloom around the world in today's century. Hence, tourists can involve themselves in a variety of conservation plans in the country and stay at the eco-friendly hotels or homestays to experience a totally new ecotourism environment (Holidaygogogo Tours Sdn Bhd, 2018).

When considering for an ecotourism destination to travel, travellers will usually think of a good diversity of eco programs and activities offered in which they may join to fully experience and appreciate the ecotourism (Holidaygogogo Tours Sdn Bhd, 2018). There are a lot of fun ecotourism sites in Malaysia that provide different kinds of programs and activities to satisfy different needs of eco tourists. One of the recommended ecotourism sites that is suitable for all types of eco tourist to visit will be Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Datuk, Perak. (See section 1.2)

Ecotourism in Malaysia attracts lots of nature lovers who share a common interest in culture, nature, wildlife and so on. This is because the tours provided in Malaysia causing a least to no impact to the environment. Last but not least, by combining meaningful preservation effort and fun as one, the eco tours in Malaysia offer the tourists a special occasion to truly learn and experience nature while promoting eco conservation awareness (Holidaygogogo Tours Sdn Bhd, 2018).

1.2 Ecotourism in Bagan Sungai Burung

Bagan Sungai Burung in Bagan Datuk, Perak is widely known as one of the popular ecotourism site in Malaysia. This can be confirmed because it attracts a lot of local tourists to bring their family here for their short vacation. Apart from that, tourists from Singapore are rate as the second highest tourist

to visit this place compare to other foreign countries (Heng, manager of Nine Island Agency, Bagan Sungai Burung, personal communication, October 30, 2018). Hence, the tour provided in Bagan Sungai Burung must have its own unique activities for tourists to participate and spend their leisure time here.

According to the tour offered by the Nine Island Agency, there are two marvelous ecotourism scenic spots in Bagan Sungai Burung which are Sky Mirror and Blue Tears. For Sky Mirror, it is 20 minutes far from Bagan Sungai Burung by boat while for the Blue Tears, it is 15 minutes away from the village by boat. Beside these two main ecotourism activities, other activities such as Lala tour (clam catching) at Sky Mirror, village tour, firefly tour and sunset tour are also included in the package of two days one night. However, all water-based activities are subjected to be change as the movement of the boat needs to depend on the water tide schedule on the day.

Sky Mirror was named because of its mirror-like reflection from the sky. It is a mystery beach sand as this wonderful scenery will only emerge for several days in a month. Besides, Sky Mirror is also a tranquil unspoiled undersea beach and this mysterious undersea beach is an area between the tidal marks. It is only visible during low tide and it will submerge under the water during high tide. Therefore, it is only accessible during exceptionally low tides when the water recedes (Perak BLUE TEAR & SKY MIRROR, 2018). With this condition, tourists are able to capture nice picture with the reflection of

the water as the water is crystal clear that can even show a super clear image of us.

For the famous Blue Tears, it is located on an island which called Nine Island. The island was officially closed on 1 April 2017 and hence tourists are not allow to visit the island anymore. However, the tour is still on going as the tourists will only see the spectacular blue tears on the boat during the journey by not touching any of it. The blue tears phenomenon are caused by plankton and when in contact with oxygen, it produces light. Tourists can only see it at night and it will light up each wave that crashes upon the shore with an electric blue glow (Badd, 2017). Currently, Bagan Sungai Burung in Perak, Malaysia is the only country around the world that having blue tears for a whole year compare to other countries that only can see blue tears during some restrictive seasons (Perak BLUE TEAR & SKY MIRROR, 2018).

1.3 Problem Statement

Bagan Sungai Burung is a famous ecotourism attraction in Perak, Malaysia which surrounded by a lot of extremely beautiful islands and those islands can be accessed by short and inexpensive boat riding. These amazing island views had attract more visitors to visit Bagan Sungai Burung over the years (Heng, 2018). Ecotourism activities take place at some of the islands such as Nine Island for Blue Tears and the other island for Sky Mirror. Those

ecotourism activities are planned and organized by Bagan Sungai Burung Chinese local community. Unfortunately, there are limited studies showed on ecotourism activities in Chinese local community at Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Datuk, Perak.

Even though there were a lot of studies mentioning about the succeed of ecotourism activities; however, there was an article written out by Goran, Mijana & Stanko (2013) stating that seasonality is one of the most salient and significant characteristics of tourism which is experienced in almost all destinations in the world. Seasonality causes the fluctuation in tourists and visitor numbers to a destination resulting at certain times in the year with overcrowded or underutilized tourist destinations, particularly in the mass tourism destination with dominant tourism. This issue was also mentioned by Heng (2018) who acts as a manager of Nine Island agency in Bagan Sungai Burung village saying that usually visitors will only come here during weekends or holidays. Hence, it is slightly difficult for the local community to generate income during off peak seasons or weekdays when the number of visitors are low.

Nonetheless, Nine Island agency will fully utilise the off peak period to do some significant maintenances or preparations. According to Goran et al. (2013), there is a need to understand the off-peak period for better planning and effective resource allocation in tourism sector as essential prerequisite

for sustainable development. One strategy to attract additional visitors to a destination when demand levels are below capacity is the modification and diversification of the destination product. Increasing demand outside peak season and redistributing demand from time of excess use to times of low demand provides an extension of the summer season and sustainable development. Offering diversified products for selective demand in the off-season could provide extended season and ensure sustainable development. A proactive approach is required to develop and offer a variety of selective tourism products for the different segments of the tourism market in the off peak season to extend the summer season. As a result, the local community would be able to increase satisfaction level of tourists as well as earn more income during off peak season.

Apart from that, the problems of sustaining a constant supply of tourists include the widening locus of international tourism, the inevitability of environmental impact, the designation of protected areas, the infrastructural and service requirements and the cost of environmental management (Cater & Lowman, 1994). According to Heng (2018), he stated that the island was officially closed by government on 1 April 2017 due to environmental impact and hence tourists are not allow to visit the island anymore. Nine Island agency losses a lot of tourists due to the sudden closed down. The agency needs to compensate back the money to the tourists who cancel the booking and apologise to them. Not only that, Nine Island agency losses a lot of money too as they invest money to construct infrastructure at Nine island for

visitors to use. However, all the effort provided by the local community just gone.

Furthermore, the policy implications of assuming that ecotourism is some sort of miracle cure for economic under-development are outlined. It is concluded that in order to ensure sustainable ecotourism development, the governments of the Developing Country need to intervene in the market, oversee integration in planning and implementation, and encourage local involvement (Cater & Lowman, 1994).

1.4 Objectives

The main objective of this study is to understand local community's perception towards ecotourism activities at Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Datuk, Perak. Besides, there are two specific objectives of this study, which are listed as below:

- a) To determine the level of local community involves in ecotourism activities at Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Datuk, Perak.
- b) To identify the factors influencing local community to participate in the development of sustainable ecotourism activities at Bagan Sungai Burung, Bagan Datuk, Perak.

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