



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***FACTORS INFLUENCING PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL COMMUNITY  
IN ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT AT BAGAN SUNGAI BURUNG,  
BAGAN DATUK, PERAK, MALAYSIA***

**LEE LIN WEI**

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**By**

**LEE LIN WEI**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,  
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Science**

**January 2020**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia  
in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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**LEE LIN WEI**

**January 2020**

**Chair : Shazali Johari, PhD**  
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This study is aimed to determine the participation level and factors influencing the local community's participation in sustainable ecotourism development at Bagan Sungai Burung, Perak. Participation of the local community in ecotourism has been highlighted in this study because it is an important input for successful ecotourism development. Lack of specific study on Chinese community and ecotourism participation in Malaysia has created a significant justification as they are the main stakeholders at Bagan Sungai Burung. A quantitative approach was used with a sample size of 200 respondents and multiple regression analysis using stepwise method was employed to identify the significant predictors. Meanwhile, the framework of Arnstein's Ladder of Participation has validated to be useful tool to determine the local community's participation in ecotourism context. The results showed that low level of citizen power implied that the local authority has included a minimal level of community's involvement in decision-making process for ecotourism development. Apart from that, the four dimensions of ecotourism impacts had average and strong relationship with each level of ladder of participation. The results showed that perceived economic impact and environmental impact were better determinants for non-participation level. In tokenism level, perceived social impact and economic impact were among the more impactful factors whereas perceived cultural impact and social impact carried stronger predictor in citizen power level. It indicated that the perception of local community on economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts will contribute to willingness of local community's participation in sustainable ecotourism development. Overall, five independent variables were identified to contribute significantly in clarifying the overall level of participation in ecotourism development which included occupation, duration of ecotourism engagement, number of family member's involvement in ecotourism, perception of local community towards homestay programme and perceived

cultural impact. Since the moderate participation level of local community in ecotourism development, local authorities such as Perak State Parks Corporation should increase the development of various ecotourism activities and facilities to sustain the active involvement of local community in ecotourism operation. Training and assistance related to ecotourism for local community should be provided in order to motivate them to participate in meetings and actively express their opinions and views. Therefore, local government should include community participation in planning, management and decision-making process. With cooperation of local community and local authorities, a balance development can be achieved to maintain the increasing number of tourists and at the same time giving benefits continuously and ensure the well-being of local community.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Master Sains

**PENGLIBATAN MASYARAKAT SETEMPAT DALAM PEMBANGUNAN  
EKOPELANCONGAN YANG MAMPAN DI BAGAN SUNGAI BURUNG,  
PERAK, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan tahap penglibatan dan faktor mempengaruhi penglibatan komuniti tempatan dalam pembangunan ekopelancongan yang mampan di Bagan Sungai Burung, Perak. Penglibatan komuniti tempatan dalam ekopelancongan telah dibincangkan dalam kajian ini kerana ia merupakan input penting bagi pembangunan ekopelancongan yang berjaya. Kurangnya kajian khusus mengenai komuniti Cina dan penglibatan ekopelancongan di Malaysia telah mencipta satu legitimasi yang penting kerana mereka adalah pemegang utama di Bagan Sungai Burung, Perak. Pendekatan kuantitatif digunakan dengan saiz sampel sebanyak 200 responden dan peramal penting telah dikenalpasti dengan menggunakan teknik analisis regresi berganda melalui kaedah stepwise. Sementara itu, rangka kerja Arnstein's Ladder of Participation telah disahkan sebagai teknik yang mampu menentukan penglibatan komuniti tempatan dalam konteks ekopelancongan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa tahap kuasa tempatan yang rendah menunjukkan bahawa pihak berkuasa tempatan memasukkan tahap penglibatan komuniti tempatan yang minima dalam proses membuat keputusan untuk pembangunan ekopelancongan. Selain daripada itu, empat dimensi kesan ekopelancongan mempunyai hubungan yang rata dan kuat dengan setiap peringkat penglibatan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan impak ekonomi dan alam sekitar adalah faktor yang mempengaruhi tahap bukan penyertaan. Dalam tahap tokenisme, impak sosial dan impak ekonomi adalah antara faktor yang lebih mempengaruhi manakala impak budaya dan impak sosial membawa ramalan yang lebih kuat dalam citizen power level. Ini menyatakan persepsi komuniti tempatan mengenai impak ekonomi, sosial, budaya dan alam sekitar akan menyumbangkan kepada kesediaan penglibatan komuniti tempatan dalam pembangunan ekopelancongan yang mampan. Secara keseluruhannya, lima pemboleh ubah bebas telah dikenalpasti untuk menyumbang secara signifikan dalam menjelaskan tahap penglibatan dalam pembangunan ekopelancongan termasuk pekerjaan, tempoh penglibatan

dalam ekopelancongan, bilangan anggota keluarga penglibatan dalam ekopelancongan, persepsi komuniti tempatan terhadap program homestay dan impak budaya. Memandangkan tahap penglibatan komuniti tempatan yang rendah dalam pembangunan ekopelancongan, pihak berkuasa tempatan seperti Perbadanan Taman Negeri Perak perlu meningkatkan pembangunan pelbagai aktiviti dan kemudahan ekopelancongan untuk mengekalkan penglibatan aktif komuniti tempatan dalam operasi pelancongan. Latihan dan penyeliaan yang berkaitan dengan ekopelancongan untuk komuniti tempatan harus disediakan untuk memotivasikan mereka supaya menyertai dalam mesyuarat dan menyatakan pendapat dan pandangan mereka secara aktif. Oleh itu, kerajaan tempatan harus melibatkan komuniti tempatan dalam perancangan, pengurusan dan proses membuat keputusan. Dengan kerjasama komuniti tempatan dan pihak berkuasa tempatan, pembangunan keseimbangan dapat dicapai untuk mengekalkan peningkatan jumlah pelancong dan pada masa yang sama untuk memberi faedah secara berterusan dan memastikan kesejahteraan masyarakat setempat.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MATTA	Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents
MOTAC	Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture
TIES	The International Ecotourism Society
UNWTO	World Tourism Organisation





# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the general review of tourism and ecotourism trends in Malaysia, especially the importance of ecotourism. It also covers the context of community development. Then, the objectives are devised from the problem statement and lastly, the significance of the study is explored.

### 1.2 Tourism in Malaysia – An Overview

The growth performance of travel and tourism industry has been highlighted because of its rapid expanding trend globally (Hong, 2018). Tourism is the activities of a person to travel and stay in his or her unfamiliar place for a period of more than one month but less than one consecutive year for the purpose of business, relaxation and other motives (UNWTO, 1992). Besides, it also defined as “the production units that provide consumption of goods and services needed by visitors” (UNWTO, 2017).

As the demands of ecotourism increase, tourism sector supports the economic growth and generates the income for the country. Tourism able to make various advantages to the local people, particularly in the developed countries (Doh, 2006). Furthermore, the tourism industry strengthens the nation economy through trade activities and creates tonnes of jobs for local communities (Fatt, Johnny & Bakansing, 2014). The fast growing of the tourism industry will transform the tourist destination spots. However, it could cause the socio-economic divergence and environmental deterioration among the local people with unplanned development.

Malaysia’s aim to achieve the status being the world's top 10 tourist destinations spot in 2019 was claimed by the Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Mohamaddin Ketapi when he launched the MATTA Fair 2018 (Fatimah, 2018). Table 1.1 shows that about 25.83 million tourist arrival to Malaysia in 2018 compared to 25.95 million in 2017, which has a slight drop by 0.5% but the tourist receipts increased by 2.4% from RM82.1 million to RM84.1 million. In the last 10 years, tourism struggles to become the fastest thriving sector. The variety of cultures from different races, unique attractions and natural settings attract high number of tourists visited Malaysia that enable them to explore the diversity of experiences. Thus, tourism industry is the major source to generate the foreign exchange income and stimulate the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Malaysia.

**Table 1.1: International tourist arrivals and receipts to Malaysia**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Arrivals/million</b>	<b>Receipts/RM billion</b>
2008	22.05	49.6
2009	23.65	53.4
2010	24.58	56.5
2011	24.71	58.3
2012	25.03	60.6
2013	25.72	65.4
2014	27.44	72.0
2015	25.72	69.1
2016	26.76	82.1
2017	25.95	82.1
2018	25.83	84.1

*Adapted from Tourism Malaysia (2019)*

Tourism becomes a major growth industry in Malaysia and the government has included this industry as one of the numerous Malaysian Development Plan (Kunasekaran, 2014). Malaysian government has recognised the industry can trigger a sustainable development when Malaysia heads to accomplish the 2020 vision as the high income-generated country. Tourism has shown significant improvements as well as investments which is a driver of macro-economic growth. Tourism Malaysia prepared Tourism Malaysia Integrated Promotion Plan 2018-2020 as a guideline for users in implementing and planning tourism promotion activities and efforts (Tourism Malaysia, 2018a). Furthermore, visiting relatives and friends achieved the highest share in 2017 with 41.9%, followed by shopping (31.1%) as well as relaxation, leisure and holiday (13.2%) from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2018a). Table 1.2 indicates the number of domestic visitors received by different states in 2017. Among the states, Selangor has the highest number of domestic visitors.

**Table 1.2: Travelling patterns of domestic visitors**

<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Visitors/million</b>
Selangor	25.5
Perak	20.1
Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur	19.0
Sabah	17.8
Sarawak	17.7

*Adapted from Department of Statistics Malaysia (2018a)*

According to King (2009), there are several tourism activities such as nature, heritage, and beach tourism in Malaysia. It is crucial for tourism marketers to figure out the various preferences and interests from the different segments of target market. This is because visitors also consider income, family size and purpose of travelling when they choose the tourism destination. For instance, health tourism is preferred by the mature and older group of consumers while

education tourism is preferred by the students (Johari, 2015). Nowadays, the trends of tourism have shifted from the focus on physical infrastructure to natural environment, especially ecotourism (Khor & Chua, 2018). Therefore, there are numerous kinds of tourist attributes for tourism marketers to ascertain the demand for different category of consumers.

### **1.3 Ecotourism**

The World Commission on Protected Areas from International Union for Conservation of Nature defined ecotourism as “environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature with accompanying cultural features for both past and present that promote conservation, has low visitor impact and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations” (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996).

Ecotourism is important in sustainable development of tourism. It is considered as sustainable from perspectives of social, economic and environment (Anup, 2016). Demands for ecotourism increase when the ecotourism has become a new trend to attract people to enjoy the natural environment rather than the man-made theme park. Nowadays, many people like to follow the vogue especially youngsters who visit the popular ecotourism site and upload the pictures on the social media platform.

Visitors, local community and environment as the components of ecotourism that play important roles to develop the tourism industry (Kiper, 2013). Without any one of them, ecotourism cannot contribute to the country's economy. Travelling to natural areas can help to gain the understanding on the history and culture of the environment/place, preservation of the surrounding ecosystem, meanwhile it produces economic opportunities that conserve the natural resources as well as valuable to local communities (Boley & Green, 2015). Thus, ecotourism has turn into a new tool to promote cultural and environmental-friendly tourism.

For authentic ecotourism to occur, it should cover a few numbers of interrelated elements namely environmental protection, education, cultural acceptance, community empowerment and economic benefit (TIES, 2012). Ecotourism focuses on its physical, cultural and biological elements which build upon the natural setting. All types of tourism must be sustainable ecologically, environmentally and socially. The challenge for ecotourism in any area is to expand its products quality and tourism capacity without influencing the environment that nurture and maintain it. Low impact of ecotourism on the environment will foster environmental education, engender cross-cultural exchange and contribute to the local economy.

A delightful and memorable ecotourism experience are gained through the environmental interpretation and education. Ecotourism brings positive impacts for the environment by encouraging conservation awareness. Participation of local people not only increases the tourist experience quality, but also can benefits the locals and the surrounding environments (Yuan et al., 2019). Local community can involve in operating the ecotourism, preparing of the products, amenities, services and knowledge. Thus, ecotourism can preserve natural resources, generate income for local people, in addition to cultural and social benefits.

### **1.3.1 Importance of Ecotourism**

Nowadays, ecotourism acts as a sustainable tourism sector which focuses on economic development, poverty alleviation, environmental protection and wildlife conservation (Anup, Kedar & Ramesh, 2015). Economic benefits and local employment gained from ecotourism would increase local environmental awareness and influence their participation in ecotourism industry (Aas, Ladkin & Fletcher, 2005). Local people with longer ecotourism experiences is expected to be more familiar with the management and has higher willingness to join the sustainable development of ecotourism.

Based on Buckley (2012) study, ecotourism is widely recognised for its benefits on the natural environment. Tourism activists and ecotourism operators mentioned that the ecotourism has contributed to the cultural, social and economic developments of the community by conserving and reinforcing the preserved areas. Unfortunately, it also causes numerous negative influences on the local environments, ecology and natural resources (Vishwanatha & Chandrashekara, 2014). When natural areas became popular in the travel industry, the natural ecosystem have been destroyed due to the overused and exceeded of carrying capacity.

An approach of sustainability arises from the impacts that caused by humans on the economic, environmental and socio-cultural elements, which guarantee the perspective of long terms ecotourism development (Menzies, 2007). Hence, well-being of the community and surrounding of the environment can be preserved.

### **1.3.2 Ecotourism Development in Malaysia**

In Malaysia, people's involvement must be emphasised in ecotourism development. As a result, sustainability in ecotourism very important which can involve more local people in the management and care about environmental conservation (Nair, 2013). The element of ecotourism is to derive the greatest advantages to the visitors and local people, simultaneously minimise negative environmental impacts.

With the purpose of developing the tourism, Malaysia emphasises the ecotourism as promotional tourism product (Anowar, Chamhuri & Shaharuddin, 2012). Malaysia has designed an isolated plan for sustainable ecotourism development in the country. Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia has designed the Malaysian National Ecotourism Plan to encourage preservation of Malaysia's cultural and natural heritage (Bhuiyan et al., 2011). National Ecotourism Plan 2016-2025 has figure out the extensive implementation for the sustainable ecotourism development in Malaysia.

Table 1.3 shows that the popular ecotourism sites in Perak, Malaysia. Perak was ranked ninth in the "Best in Travels 2017" list during the Visit Perak Year 2017 which gave a big boost to become one of the best Asian destinations (Metroperak Team, 2016). Perak was also recognised by popular international travel guide Lonely Planet, as one of the top 10 places in Asia for tourists to visit. Since Perak is one of the states that is not well-developed and consists of many primitive forests and natural areas, it is suitable to be developed into ecotourism site. Various types of tourism destination such as highlands, islands, forest reserves can be found in Perak. This is the main reason for the country to establish Perak as the best travel state in Malaysia.

**Table 1.3: List of proposed ecotourism clusters in Perak, Malaysia**

State	Macro/Regional Cluster
Perak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pulau Sembilan - Segari Melintang - Teluk Senangin</li> <li>• Royal Belum - Lenggong - Kuala Kangsar</li> <li>• Taiping - Bukit Merah - Batu Kurau</li> <li>• Batu Gajah - Gopeng - Gua Tempurung - Ulu Geroh</li> </ul>

*Adapted from MOTAC, 2019*

#### 1.4 Community Development

Community is referred as residents, locals, natives or hosts (Singh, Timothy & Dowling, 2003), who have different attributes, share settlement in the similar geographic area, and usage of the natural resources. The implementation of ecotourism development become challenging because of the diversity of local people (Chan & Bhatta, 2013). Ecotourism is betrayed as a concept to determine the issues of locals.

Community development is a community's action with fully dependent upon the community's initiative and active participation to build the conditions of social and economic progress (Lotz, 1967). Hope (1996) stated that community development is a viable alternative conceptualisation that can enclose actions which fulfil the needs of existing inhabitants of a community. It is a continuously process that maintain long-term economic prosperity and social equity,

minimise consumption of natural resources, conserve heritages, maintain diversity, and enhance community involvement and teamwork.

## **1.5 Chinese Community and Tourism**

In Malaysia, Chinese is the second largest ethnic group which forms about 23.0% of the total population equivalent to 32.4 million of people (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2018b). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, most of the Chinese immigrants are known for business activities. Malayan Communist Party was implemented to relocate Chinese public into an isolated area (i.e. New Village) and formed most of the Chinese communities we see today. Tourism Malaysia will celebrate the auspicious festival especially in Penang, in conjunction with Chinese New Year. Both locals and foreign tourists are invited to the event where they will get to enjoy local foods, witness the rich cultural heritage and artistic dance performances of the Chinese community.

Chinese New Year celebration targets to encourage harmony, knowledge and goodwill among the different ethnic communities in the country, which in line with the spirit of 1Malaysia. The celebration is also aligned with Tourism Malaysia's effort to foster domestic tourism and to encourage Malaysians travel in-bound for their holidays as the country is blessed with many fascinating destinations (Tourism Malaysia, 2017). Ho (2017) stated that the leaders of Chinese community believed that the number of China tourists will increase continuously as Malaysia bonds closely with China. This is because they feel warm and cosy in multi-racial Malaysia due to the delicious foods, friendly people and cultural diversity of large ethnic Chinese's population.

## **1.6 Problem Statement**

Presently, the number of researches conducted on local people behaviours towards ecotourism development for future is rising because of the connection between government future development and community support. For example, country such as Indonesia directly empowering its local people by expanding the potential while maintaining the environment and culture based on the sustainable tourism principle at different ecotourism villages (Riza, 2019). However, to date, there has been limited studies on community participation at a particular tourism destination in Malaysia (Mustapha, Azman & Ibrahim, 2013). This is also reinforced by the research of Uma et al. (2011) reveals that the residents at Kinabatangan, Sabah, Malaysia have less involvement in rural tourism. Scheyvens (2003) mentioned that community unsuccessful to involve themselves and even maximise the profits of tourism development. The low participation level of community will thus hinder the success of ecotourism development.

One of the examples of locals participating in ecotourism can be seen in Bagan Sungai Burung, an area situated at the district of Bagan Datuk. It is one of the oldest fishing villages among eight biggest fishing villages in Hilir Perak. There are various changes experienced by the local people due to the development of ecotourism in Bagan Sungai Burung. In recent years, many villagers have looked for an alternative source of income which is tourism (Chew, Seah & Yim, 2015). The ecotourism development can impact the local community either via social, cultural, economic or environmental factors. The impacts of ecotourism can result in positive outcomes or negative outcomes and can be damaging to the local community (Aref, Ma'rof & Gill, 2009).

Bagan Sungai Burung is a small fishing village as well as a new ecotourism site which offers ecotourism activities, mainly of sky mirror and blue tears in Nine Island which attract local tourists and international tourists. Ecotourism development has enabled the involvement of locals, especially to enhance the socio-economic status of the community, and to alleviate the community's poverty. However, in recent years, there were several issues which have resulted in the closing of Nine Island.

Environmental degradation happened in Nine Island is a direct result from the over-development of ecotourism which is considered as one of the serious local issues. Previously, the Perak State Parks Corporation imposed only 120 visitors per daily limit but 300 to 400 people were landed on the island each day using unauthorised boats and without any licences (John, 2017). He also mentioned that the high influx of tourists disrupts the natural habitat of plankton (blue tears) and brings negative effects on environmental sustainability. Additionally, excessive tourism causes the Nine Island no more operate since April 1, 2017 due to the shortage of local people's participation to manage the island (Yeap, 2017).

An inadequacy of the local people participating in ecotourism including Bagan Sungai Burung area may also contribute to the migration of youths. Participation of locals in ecotourism must be encouraged to reduce the outmigration of youths to the city. For community in Bagan Sungai Burung, this is considered vital as there are limited career opportunities in the village and many young adults are unwilling to engage in fishing activity. As a result, the population of young adults has been declined in Bagan Sungai Burung for recent decades (Chew et al., 2015). This situation will become worse if the elderly people are no longer operating the business, further gliding down the ecotourism development. The population of the village is heavily skewed towards the older generation, which is a very common problem in many new villages in Malaysia. According to Chew et al. (2015) study, new investments and tourism development projects are needed to boost the local economy because such efforts are very important to create new employment opportunities which encourage youths to remain in the village.

Apart from that, homestay programme in Bagan Sungai Burung is unable to develop, as mentioned by Heng (personal communication, October 31, 2018) who act as the manager of Nine Island Agency. According to him, the visitors will usually come to Nine Island during weekends or holidays only. This is supported with a study done by Bureau of Innovation and Consultancy (2009) stated that not much of income generated from homestays due to the lack of demand from visitors throughout the off-peak seasons. Hence, it is slightly difficult for them to generate income during weekdays or off-peak seasons and eventually gave up from being a homestay operator. However, local community's involvement in the homestay programme can alters the behaviours and attitudes of them towards ecotourism initiatives (Priya, Alexandra & Prodyut, 2016). The support and involvement from local community is crucial in ecotourism because local community's participation can guide the decisions made in projects and issues which are directly linked to their places of residence and environment (Sangkakorn & Suwannarat, 2013).

During the in-depth interview session with the Chinese community in Bagan Sungai Burung, researcher figured out another pressing issue which the state government did not include much power of local community in the management.

*"I agree that Perak State Parks Corporation has their responsibility to manage the Nine Island, but they do not support any funds to develop the ecotourism activities in the island. Besides, they even destroyed all the facilities after being developed for four months without any notification. The newly built infrastructures in the island which was the local communities spent their own money to provide better experience for the tourists" (Heng Lai Hen, head of village, personal communication, October 31, 2018).*

This causes a friction and creates a gap between local communities and authorities that subsequently creates a stumbling block in achieving sustainable ecotourism development. It is crucial to figure out the degree of local people's involvement in the tourism development in Bagan Sungai Burung. According to Marzuki, Hay and James (2012), local communities must have opportunity to participate in the process of decision-making so that they can be protected from any untoward consequences arising from tourism development.

Bagan Sungai Burung offers the natural and environmental resources that speak on behalf of the local community's identity. This kind of ecotourism should be further explored and developed as a tourism product to help local communities gain economic benefits and to provide tourists with the sense of appreciation for the natural environment. Therefore, based on the issues that have been discussed, this research is implemented to understand the local people's involvement in management of tourism so that it can encourage sustainable ecotourism development.



## **1.7 Research Questions**

From the problem statements, this study was proposed to answer a question on the current level of local community's participation in ecotourism development at Bagan Sungai Burung. Research questions that will be addressed in this research are:

1. What are the perceptions of the local community in ecotourism development?
2. What are the participation levels of the local community in ecotourism development?
3. What are the factors influencing the participation levels of the local community in ecotourism development in terms of sustainable development?

## **1.8 Research Objectives**

The general objective is to analyse the local community's participation in sustainable ecotourism development at Bagan Sungai Burung. The specific objectives of the study are listed below:

1. To examine the perceptions of the local community in ecotourism development;
2. To measure the participation levels of the local community in ecotourism development;
3. To determine the factors influencing the participation levels of the local community in ecotourism development in terms of sustainable development.

## **1.9 Significance of the Study**

This research will assist the stakeholders within the involvement of local people in ecotourism. Several authorities that will utilise the findings of this research included the villagers, policy makers, governmental planner, academicians, corporate sectors, and non-governmental organisations. In particular, findings on participation level and perception of local community in ecotourism industry will assist tourism planners to design for the better ecotourism projects with the community regarding the aspect of planning, marketing and product development.

Since there are limited studies done specifically about the Chinese community in Malaysia, it is believed that the findings of the local community's ecotourism participation will contribute the sector to become a more profitable and

sustainable for the community. Besides, it can be used as a scale of measurement and comparison in the future research. Any new factors identified that could influence the involvement of local people in ecotourism development would be a unique contribution to the existing literature on the participation of local people in ecotourism industry. Moreover, the research will enable the local people to gain better understanding on sustainable ecotourism development so that they will be more motivated in participating ecotourism projects and actively express their opinions and views. Hence, communities can gain economic benefits as well as improve their livelihoods.

### 1.10 Operational Definition of Concepts

Upon reviewing the existing concepts on the ecotourism development from previous researches, several concepts need to be defined and explored to orientate the readers and provide a foundation for the study. These concepts are sustainable tourism, ecotourism development, homestay programme, ecotourism impact, ecotourism activities, economic, social, cultural, environmental, local community, participation, social exchange theory, and community development.

**Sustainable tourism:** Sustainable tourism is defined as a setting in which tourist arrivals to an area will sustain the culture, environmental and economy of its residents (Muhanna, 2006). In this research, sustainable tourism is referred as tourism which associates the nature-based of Bagan Sungai Burung as a long-run progression of environmental, social and economic accomplishment.

**Ecotourism development:** Local community considers ecotourism development as the awareness of high value of natural attractions and they wish to rejuvenate the ecotourism activities as well as empathy for preservation and the needs for sustainable tourism (Bagul, 2009). Ecotourism development in Bagan Sungai Burung covers the perspective of homestay programme, ecotourism activities and ecotourism impacts.

**Homestay programme:** A homestay programme gives tourists the opportunity to stay with a chosen family, interact and experience the daily life of their homestay family and learn the culture and lifestyle of the rural community in Malaysia (MOTAC, 2014). Bagan Sungai Burung offers simple but fully furnished homestays for tourists so that they have a comfortable place to stay and gain good experience.

**Ecotourism activities:** Ecotourism activities included in a tour that are designed to entertain clients and are coordinated by a group of professional guide or interpreter which related to the natural environment (EcoFriendlyTravel, 2011). Bagan Sungai Burung with the popular activities

such as sky mirror, blue tears and firefly tour as one of the new ecotourism sites in Perak.

**Ecotourism impacts:** Ecotourism impact contributes either the positive or negative effects to the social, economic and environmental development of the local areas so it acts as the findings of sustainable tourism (Sangpikul, 2017). This refers to Bagan Sungai Burung local community's perception on the impacts of tourism whether positive or negative in terms of economic, cultural, social and environmental effects.

**Economic:** The natural resources are regarded as an important factor generating the economic benefits to the business sector and local communities through tourist activities and expenditures (Hunt et al., 2014). Local people in Bagan Sungai Burung work in various job opportunity to generate the local economy benefits.

**Environment:** Boley and Green (2015) stated that protection of natural landscapes provides the future generations to experience the same quality of nature in the sustainable ecotourism context. An environment provides huge benefits to the local community due to the diversity of natural resources such as in Bagan Sungai Burung depend on sky mirror and blue tears plays the dominant role in tourism.

**Social:** Social benefits can be enhanced through the intercultural appreciation and understanding between the host community and visitors (Hunt et al., 2014). Interaction between tourists and local people create a relationship between guests and host contribute the changes of individual behaviour, moral conduct and collective lifestyles in Bagan Sungai Burung.

**Cultural:** Local performance presented to tourists may be regarded as the way of local cultural preservation since it is presented and preserved from one generation to another (Rigatti, 2016). In Bagan Sungai Burung, the tourists do not stay longer with the local community, so they are not much expose with the original culture and local experience.

**Local community:** Local community is the people who live in the same geographical area and links by common interests, culture and other characteristics (Rasoolimanesh & Jaafar, 2016). Local community in this study refers to the Chinese people living in Bagan Sungai Burung.

**Participation:** Local communities and other authorities involve in the plan of actions to guide the community development is called participation (Phiri, 2009). In this study, local community's ecotourism participation is very important to regulate the sustainable ecotourism development at Bagan Sungai Burung.

**Social exchange theory:** In ecotourism perspective, social exchange theory is the interaction of people to exchange resources which can minimise the cost and maximise the benefit (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). In this study, the local people of Bagan Sungai Burung who receive the benefits from ecotourism tend to support the development of ecotourism and have the positive perception towards the ecotourism impacts.

**Community development:** Community development has emphasised an action hold by the people to pursue the procedures and take actions to deal with the problems and achieve the requirements of the locals so that the living standards can be improved (Stone & Wall, 2004). It has been prescribed as a popular means to enhance the economic, social and environmental quality of life for community in Bagan Sungai Burung.

### 1.11 Research Outline

The research is organised into five chapters, starting with Introduction, followed by Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussions, and lastly, Summary, Implications and Recommendations.

Chapter one begins with the study backgrounds and the problem statement. It reveals the research questions and objectives of the study. Besides that, it also includes the significance of the study, operational definition of concepts and research outline.

Chapter two covers an overview of literatures related to tourism, ecotourism, sustainable development, community participation, local community's perceptions and community development. Furthermore, a comprehensive review of literatures related to the concept of economic, social, cultural and environmental perspectives, Arnstein's ladder of participation and social exchange theory are discussed. In addition, a proposed theory and conceptual framework are also included.

Chapter three discusses on the methodology where it reveals the quantitative research design, technique and procedure used in this research. Research methodology covers the sampling, instrumentation, pilot test, data collection process and data analysis procedures using IBM SPSS Statistics.

Chapter four is about the results and discussions. Generally, it presents the results gained from the descriptive analysis for socio-demographic profiles, community characteristics, community perceptions and participation levels as well as multiple regression analysis to identify the factors affecting the local community's participation in ecotourism development.

Chapter five summarises this study by concluding the results and reviewing the implications of the study. Apart from that, it recommends for the future research directions and limitations of the current research.

### **1.12 Summary**

The first chapter briefly introduces the study and discusses the purposes of the study. It begins by explaining about the trends of ecotourism, Chinese community and tourism in general. Next, it also defines the research questions and objectives as well as the terms used as a guide throughout the study.

Overall, ecotourism can bring benefits to the residents at the same time educate tourists protect the natural environments. In Malaysia, there are limited studies regarding the local community's participation in ecotourism development covered by researchers. Thus, the level of local community's participation in ecotourism should be identified so that the ecotourism industry can be well-developed.

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