



Understanding Motivation Factors of Tourism Entrepreneurs in Tasik Kenyir

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Article Information

Keywords

Ecotourism, Tourism Entrepreneur, Motivation, Tasik Kenyir.

Abstract

Ecotourism has the potential to generate both economic returns and employment for the recipient country while also ensuring the protection of local environments and cultures. Such in the case of Malaysia, the natural wealth from the man-made lake Tasik Kenyir, which covers 260 km² and contains of 340 islands, more than 14 waterfalls, numerous rapids and rivers has rich reserve of natural, ecological and physical characteristics in its geographical extent. These amalgams of nature based have brought a great potential to the local communities and destination economically through business opportunity and becoming tourism entrepreneur. This paper empirically investigates on tourism entrepreneur's characteristics and motivation in pursuing ecotourism businesses in Tasik Kenyir. The data for the study were handed-collected by survey questionnaires and the result shows that ecotourism operator in Tasik Kenyir were male dominated and between age of 31 to 40 with 100 percent Malay operators. They were motivated by the 'pull factors' as opposed to the 'push factors'. These findings concur that tourism industry through ecotourism products in Tasik Kenyir benefited the local community by generating employment and income which realizing the Malaysian government objective to increase the participation of rural populations in tourism-related activities.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, tourism has been acknowledged as a tool for bringing economic benefits to a country. In Malaysia, tourism industry has become an importance source of revenue and contributes economic activity among the community. Malaysia Government sees tourism as one of the main providers of employment, a key foreign exchange earner, contributing to economic growth as well as strengthening the services account of the balance of payment (Ninth Malaysia Plan, 20016-2010).

In an effort to position Malaysia as a premier tourist destination, the Malaysia Government collaborated with the private sector and local communities intensified promotional and marketing activities. Local authorities and communities are encouraged to be more actively involved in promoting the country's tourism attractions. One of the many other tourism attractions promoted by Malaysia is ecotourism. In Malaysia, ecotourism is defined as 'travel and visitation that is environmentally responsible to relatively undisturbed natural areas in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (including any accompanying cultural features, both past and present), promotes

conservation, has low visitor impacts and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations' (The National Ecotourism Plan, 1997).

Malaysia's geographical landscape in both Peninsular and East Malaysia, coastal lowlands with mountainous interiors that have diverse flora and fauna, and there are dozens of small islands along the coast. Such geographic features allow a wide variety of activities, from nature-based, eco-friendly adventures to activities such as beach holidays and scuba diving. The country's mountainous landscape and tropical forests offer a range of outdoor activities such as caving, hiking, jungle trekking, white-water rafting, rock climbing, bird watching and river cruising, not only to domestic tourists but also to international tourists. Malaysia's landscape is varied and each of the regions in Malaysia has its own local attractions, which are promoted as ecotourism products (see Table 1).

TABLE 1
ECOTOURISM PRODUCTS IN MALAYSIA

Region	States	Ecotourism products	Attractions
Northern Region	Perlis	Nature and adventure	Kuala Perlis,,KelamCave, Wang Burma Cave,Ayer Forest Reserve,Wang Mu Forest Reserve
	Kedah	Islands and beaches	Langkawi Island,Payar Island Marine Park,Dayang Bunting Lake,Beras Basah Island
		Nature and adventure	Ulu Legong Hot Spring, Bukit Batu Pahat, Kota Kuala Muda, Muara Sungai Muda, Langkawi Mangroves
	Pulau Pinang	Islands and beaches	Batu Feringghi Beach
		Nature and adventure	Pulau Pinang National Park, Tropical Spice Garden, Pulau Pinang Botanic Garden
	Perak	Island and beaches	Pangkor Island
Nature and adventure		Sungai Klah Hot Spring Park, Belum Forest Reserve, Bukit Larut (Maxwell Hill), Tempurung Cave	
Central Region	Negeri Sembilan	Island and beaches	Port Dickson Beach
Southern Region	Johor	Island and beaches	Sibu Island, Desaru Beach, Aur Island, Kukup Island, Johor National Park
		Nature and adventure	Kota Tinggi Waterfall, Tanjung Piai National Park, Sungai Lebam Wetlands, Gunung Ledang
East Coast Region	Kelantan	Island and beaches	Bisikan Bayu Beach
		Nature and adventure	Gunung Stong State Park
	Terengganu	Island and beaches	Redang Island, Perhentian Island, Lang Tengah Island, Kapas Island
		Nature and adventure	Kenyir Lake
	Pahang	Island and beaches	Tioman Island
		Nature and adventure	Genting Highland ,Taman Negara, Cameron Highlands, Fraser's Hill
Sarawak, Sabah and Labuan	Sarawak	Nature and adventure	Gunung Mulu National Park, Bako National Park, Gunung Gading National Park
	Sabah	Island and beaches	Sipadan Island, Tuanku Abdul Rahman Marine Park,Layang-layang Island, Mabul Island
		Nature and adventure	Danum Valley,Mount Kinabalu, Rainforest Discovery Center, Sepilok Orang Utan Sanctuary

Source: Set, K (2013)

ECOTOURISM IN TASIK KENYIR

In relation to ecotourism in Tasik Kenyir, this biggest man-made lake is originated from a hydroelectric project in 1985. It is enriched by various types of flora and fauna consisting of tropical rainforests, wildlife and wild plants. This has become the special attraction for visitors especially the ecotourist to visit Tasik Kenyir. In 2013, tourist arrival increased by 28,000 to 62,9222 compared to 34,778 in 2006 (KETENGAH. 2015). The low number of tourist arrival in 2014, with only recorded 57,980 is reflected to the severe flooding in Tasik Kenyir during monsoon season which has caused excess water in Tasik Kenyir dam overflowed and all business operation and tourism activities were shutdown.

Nevertheless, this ecotourism attraction in Tasik Kenyir has spurred the establishment of tourism businesses in Tasik Kenyir. Many local community has start-up tourism businesses and ecotourism operators in Tasik Kenyir offering nature-based activities such as rain forest tracking, caving, canoeing, picnicking near waterfalls and

fishing-related activities. Noting the potential contribution of the ecotourism products not only to the tourism agenda of the country but also to the development of the local community, it is important that research on motivation factors be undertaken. The knowledge on motivational factors among ecotourism operator in Tasik Kenyir will help in providing useful insights and understanding on Malaysian tourism entrepreneurs's business culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Entrepreneur

In the context of tourism studies, a great deal of research has been conducted on different segments, including the constrained growth of the tourism industry (Rasul & Manandhar, 2009), the environmental goals of rural family-owned/family-operated tourism (Carlsen, Getz & Knight, 2001), financial performance (Sharma & Upneja, 2005) and family business (Getz & Carlsen, 2005). An intensive literature review reveals that there have been very few studies on tourism entrepreneurship and small businesses in the tourism industry. One of the significant results from research by Dewhurst and Horobin (1998) highlighted the 'lifestyle' motivations of tourism entrepreneurs. They are motivated by multiple factors such as providing employment for family members, companionship with guests and fulfilling their interest or hobbies (Schroeder, 2003; Skokic Morrison, 2011). These findings characterize tourism entrepreneurs with a low degree of entrepreneurial motivation, as their managerial decisions are largely based on personalised criteria (Dewhurst & Horobin, 1998; Lashley & Rowson, 2010). Further evidence demonstrates that tourism entrepreneurs are primarily motivated to maintain their business at what they feel is a level that allows them to maintain the 'lifestyle' of a tourism entrepreneur (Carlsen, Morrison & Weber, 2008; Shaw & Williams, 1990, 1998; Tomas et al., 2011).

Tourism entrepreneurs are labelled lifestyle entrepreneurs as they reject economic and business growth. Self-employment and control are more important motives for these entrepreneurs and disparities occur among TSMEs in relation to the aims and objectives of the individual business, which are not always consistent with economic profit objectives (Beaver, Lashley, & Steward, 1998; Strobl & Peters, 2013). Morrison and Teixeira (2004) and Skokic and Morrison (2011) assert that the motivations among tourism entrepreneurs are associated with family lifecycles, rejection of the corporate way of life, and the general pursuit of a work/life balance, all of which contribute to the majority of the tourism small and medium enterprises (TSMEs) set up mainly to satisfy personal and family goals.

The Motivational Factors in a Push-Pull Theory of Entrepreneurship

The expression of being either 'pulled' or 'pushed' into starting a business has been used extensively in the literature regarding owner-managers' motivation to start a business (Brodie and Stanworth, 1998; Burtner and Moore, 1997; Gray, 1994; Hamilton, 1987). The 'pull' motivation factor is associated with the individual's strong positive internal desire to start a business venture. The opposite 'push' motivation factor is associated with a possible equally strong desire to start a business venture, but based on external negative reasons. Personal freedom, independence gained from being one's own boss, personal satisfaction, a less rigid and more flexible lifestyle and greater job satisfaction are pull motivation factors identified in the literature (Birley and Westhead, 1994; Brush 1992; LeCornu et al., 1996; Loscocco, 1997).

A study by Fielden et al. (2000) indicated that a large proportion of their sample (88 per cent) listed making money as a motivator for their business ventures. However, 71 per cent mentioned that job satisfaction, greater independence, creating opportunities, encountering new challenges and pursuing one's own interests are also important factors that led them to open their own business. According to Glancey and Pettigrew (1997), motivations for founding a business fall into two broad groups, which are (1) those that reflect the 'push' factors, such as redundancy and job insecurity, and the need for supplementary income, and (2) those that reflect the 'pull' factors, such as the desire to be his/her own boss, high levels of profit, and spotting a business opportunity, or retirement.

In Australia, Bransgrove and King (1996) reported that the top goals of owners of small tourism business in both urban and rural settings are challenge or stimulus, business opportunity, lifestyle and long-term financial gain. According to Getz and Carlsen (2000), 34 per cent of their respondents suggest that an appealing lifestyle is the major reason for venturing into business, and this is followed by business opportunities and investments. Glancey and Pettigrew (1997) found that the behaviour of the majority (65%) of their respondents adhered to the pull factors, and this provided evidence for categorising them as opportunistic entrepreneurs. Rural entrepreneurs, as reported by Schroeder (2003), are motivated by multiple pull factors such as providing

employment for family members, generating additional income, meeting the need of the market, companionship with guests, fulfilling their interest or hobby, and providing employment to communities.

METHODOLOGY

This study is an exploratory and descriptive in nature. A survey technique has been acknowledged as being particularly useful in fact-finding and is descriptive in nature (Abdel-Khalik & Ajinkya, 1979). Consistent with previous studies in ecotourism products and activities (Jaafar & Maideen, 2012), this study employed a descriptive questionnaire among ecotourism operators in Tasik Kenyir.

The questionnaires were distributed among ecotourism operators in Tasik Kenyir registered under KETENGAH. The number of ecotourism operators was obtained from the KETENGAH and approximately 66 respondents were identified using the table of Cohen (1969) as well as Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to determine the sample of the total population. Items on motivation were adapted from Osman, I., Noor Hazlina, A., Zainal A.H., Azrina, H., Saridan, A.B and Nur Diyana, T. (2010) which comprising 20 items with 13 items reflects on the pull factors and 7 items reflects on the push factors. A 5-point Likert scale was used, indicating from 1 (very important) to 5 (least important) on each item. Out of 78 registered ecotourism operators at the Kenyir Lake, 50 responses were usable for the analysis. A reliability test and descriptive analysis were performed using SPSS version 18.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Profiles of Ecotourism Respondent Samples

Most of the respondents were between 21 to 40 years old (68 per cent) and majority it is a male-own business (88 per cent) compare to female-own (12 per cent). This indicates that the ecotourism businesses are less attractive to the women to take part in Tasik Kenyir. Most of the respondents completed eleven years of schooling. Prior to their involvement in the ecotourism businesses, majority were a freelancer (56 per cent), worked in a private sector (32 per cent) and some had working experience in public sector (8 per cent). In terms of years of involvement in tourism industry. 38 per cent of the respondents have been in the ecotourism businesses more than 10 years, 34 per cent between 4 to 9 years and 28 per cent just in the ecotourism business for less than 3 years.

Ecotourism Operators Structure

Table 2 presents the ownership type of ecotourism operators in Tasik Kenyir. Most of the ecotourism operators were sole proprietorship (76 per cent). Second most is private limited company (14 per cent), followed by partnership (10 per cent). The simplicity in establishing and terminating sole proprietorships compared to private limited companies, has made it the most common ownership among Malaysian SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprise Corporation Malaysia, 2011). Majority take the ecotourism business as the major source of income where 72 per cent runs the business on a full time basis indicating their ecotourism businesses as their main source of income. Rather than only 28 per cent established their ecotourism businesses on part-time basis reflected the ecotourism business is as their additional source of income.

TABLE 2
PROPORTION OF ECOTURISM OPERATORS' OWNERSHIP

Type of ownership	Percentage
Sole proprietorship	76
Private limited company	14
Partnership	10
Ownership status	
Full-time	72
Part-time	28

Source: Data derived from survey

Table 3 shows in terms of the years they are established, a few of the ecotourism operators are considered experienced firms as they have been in the operation for more than 30 years (14 per cent). More than 28 per cent ecotourism operators were established in between 1990 – 1999. Majority ecotourism operators in Tasik Kenyir were established after 2000 with 58 per cent. The government's tourism-specific programs and policies (especially during the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Malaysia Plans) contribute to the high number of ecotourism operators establishment in Tasik Kenyir. During these periods, Malaysia government emphasized a highly

integrated approach and implementation on tourism planning which increased the number TSMES establishments. For example, during the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991-1995), the government has set up a special fund for tourism of RM 200 million, focusing on small and medium-sized projects. The government also introduced a new clause of the Investment Incentive Act of 1968, which provided an income tax exemption for tour operators (Economic Planning Unit, 1991). During the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996 – 2000), the government focused on expanding the country's tourism activities, products and market (Economic Planning Unit, 1996). In the Eighth Malaysia Plan, the government focused on specialized tourism products and services including eco-tourism.

TABLE 3
PROPORTION OF ECOTOURISM OPERATORS' YEARS OF ESTABLISHMENT

Year of Establishments	Percentage
1981-1989	14
1990-1999	28
After 2000	58

Source: Data derived from survey

Profile of Ecotourism Businesses

Table 4 presents products and activities information regarding ecotourism operators of product and activities in Tasik Kenyir. It shows that most of the respondents were houseboat operators, followed by speedboat operators and resort. Most of the ecotourism operators provide fishing activities (92 per cent) which is the key ecotourism activities in Tasik Kenyir followed by jungle tracking (70 per cent). These activities were located in Santuari Kelah Sungai Petang, Air Terjun Saok, Air Terjun Lasir, Air Terjun Tembat, Taman Negara, Taman Herba, Taman Orkid, Gua Bewah and Gua Taat in Tasik Kenyir.

TABLE 4
ECOTOURISM ACTIVITIES INFORMATION

Type of business	Percentage
Houseboat	74
Speedboat	24
Resort	2
Activities provided	Percentage
Boating	28
Fishing	92
Canoeing	22
Swimming	48
Jungle Tracking	70
Picnicking at Waterfall	68
Bird watching	48
Camping	48
Kenyir Island Hopping	60

Source : Data derived from survey

Motivation of the Ecotourism Operators

As depicted in Table 5, it is evident that the ecotourism operators were motivated by the 'pull factors'. The most important reasons for engaging in ecotourism operators are to pursue one's own interest of ecotourism activities ($M=1.43$) followed by passion in ecotourism businesses ($M=1.63$) and desire for a balanced lifestyle ($M=1.63$). Other 'pull factors' such as desire to generate income, desire to own a business as well as personal satisfaction are also significant motives for involving in this green tourism industry. Interestingly, the 'push factors' comprising of retrenched, no job security in the previous employment, dissatisfaction with the former job and unemployed have been rated as very low as the reasons to engage in ecotourism businesses. The finding suggests that tourism entrepreneur in Tasik Kenyir are not being 'pushed' to the industry by these external forces. Rather, the prime motivation is their passion and inclination to pursue something that they enjoy doing and this is probably reflected that most ecotourism operators in Tasik Kenyir are on a full-time business and not as an additional source of income.

TABLE 5
MOTIVATION OF ECOTURISM OPERATORS (N=66)

	Items	Mean	SD
Pull Factors			
1.	Desire to generate income	1.67	.606
2.	Passion in this business	1.63	.615
3.	To prove own ability to be successful	2.30	1.119
4.	Personal satisfaction	1.83	.699
5.	Pursue one's own interest	1.43	.568
6.	Desire to own a business	1.80	.887
7.	Desire to have control over what one is doing	1.93	.785
8.	Desire for more flexibility in managing own time	2.30	1.119
9.	See the opportunity/potential in this business	2.27	1.015
10.	Inspired by friends' and other peoples' success	1.93	.785
11.	Encouraged by a friend	1.93	.785
12.	Desire for a balanced lifestyle	1.63	.718
13.	Desire for a balance between work and family	2.13	.900
Push Factors			
14.	Economic depression	1.90	.662
15.	Frustrated with the level of income in the former job	1.90	.759
16.	Retrenched	2.67	1.155
17.	Work pressure due to downsizing	2.00	.695
18.	Dissatisfaction with former job	3.57	1.223
19.	Unemployed	3.77	1.524
20.	No job security in the previous employment	3.47	1.358

Source: Data derived from survey

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the literature by adding motivational factors that stimulate ecotourism operators to engage in ecotourism businesses. The results shows that majority of the ecotourism operators are towards 'life-style' entrepreneurship where majority the ecotourism operators in Tasik Kenyir reflects their managerial decisions are based highly on personalised criteria mainly it involves in satisfying their personal and family goals. It can be associate that entrepreneurial behaviour of ecotourism operators is characterised by the lack of motivation to pursue the goal of maximising economic gain which reflects the definition of tourism entrepreneur, although not well established, where they reject economic factors as the reason for them to be in the ecotourism businesses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the support of the Kenyir Research Institute, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu.

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