

## **PACKAGING MYTHS FOR TOURISM, THE RUNGUS OF KUDAT BY ONG PUAY LIU. 2008. 408 PAGES**

Reviewed by Rostika Petrus Boroh  
*School of Business and Economics, Universiti Malaysia Sabah*

Email: [rpboroh@ums.edu.my](mailto:rpboroh@ums.edu.my)

The book is about the Rungus community of Kudat, Sabah and their dilemma in participating in the tourism sector. The writer was eager to show that as the development of the tourism sector was taking place in Sabah and generally in Malaysia, the Rungus community as well wouldn't be left out of the process but at the same time to sustain their socio-cultural primitivism. Both micro level which focus on commodification and consumption of a human community by fellow human communities and the issues arising from the process of transformation and re-creation and re-presentation in the name of tourism is discussed. As for macro level, the over demanding industry required the community to endure poverty annihilation through the rural community development approach and how to bear with this in the context of tourism.

The first part of the book is basically focusing on the general view of the perspective study in the tourism industry. It goes specifically on the development of tourism in Sabah and narrowing down to Rungus community. The concept of tourism in the sense of local community development is significant as the discussions on issues such as involvement and participation of local and government in partnership, control over planning and decision-making has make it less difficult to be align with the aim of the tourism development.

One of the issues being addressed is the failure of capturing the right target of group or people to be developed (p.131). The rising sophistication and competitive nature of tourism industry should becoming the accurately tools to tackle the needs of both community and industry in developing tourism. Aspects such as limited needs, low work motivation, unwillingness to adapt to new environment, low work motivation, low commitment and preference for familiar and domestic habitat should not only bearable to only one party but rather to those who are involved.

The main content of the book is specifically allocated on the explanation on the Rungus community in Sabah including the social organization such as housing, family, economic activities, cultural characteristics (clothing and costumes) religious and beliefs, health and education as well as their participation in a modern, technological, demanding and ever-changing service industry. The crucial concern of the writer is how do the Rungus cope and manage this new experience. The dilemma arose as the Rungus community was trying to endure the rapid changing on the development but the industry itself required them to stay as they are as the industry development depends on their primitive existence.

Despite of the willingness to participate in the changing and development atmosphere, the local community as well are in dilemma to sustain the value of primitivism as one of the main attraction to the tourist. The demand of being in the same scope of primitivism will require them to involve partially in the development process and sacrificing the adaptation of modern and changing livelihood. The sophistication is not what the tourist expected, but it is about the primitiveness of the ethnic itself. The same experience was taking place in the Bavanggazo longhouse of Rungus community. Most of the tourists who came were mesmerize by the 'authentic' culture they have.

Towards the end of the chapters, discussion on villagers' concern about how the media expose the information on their simple life which according to them is not as what being exposed. The gap between community's expectations and tourist

needs creating much concern on how this community would have to sustain the livelihood being one part of the primitive socio-cultural.

Despite of conflict on sustaining the primitivism, the Rungus are not directly involved in creating tour packages. This leads to them not experiencing the economic benefits from tourism. The issue here, why were the main 'character' in promoting tourism has no say on how do they act in the play?

In conclusion this book is basically combining the myths and challenges of Rungus community in participation of getting economic livelihood and standard of living. Modernisation has come in between of the living standard improvement and the tourist expectations that lead to the tourism development benefits economically.