

SUCCESS INDICATOR'S FOR SABAH ECOTOURISM SITES

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ABSTRACT

Sabah, one of the thirteen Malaysian states, is located in the northern part of Malaysian Borneo. It is a melting pot of many different cultures and traditions, being home to about 2.9 million people with more than 30 ethnic groups. It is also known as one of the twelve mega-diversity sites in the world with its rich living heritage, ethnic makes it ideal for the ecotourism industry. Sabah enjoys a steady flow of eco tourists from domestic and international markets with a gradual increase in the number of visitor arrival each year. Sabah's ecotourism is categorized by its natural attraction, wildlife, and wilderness habitats. This paper sets out to interpret and develop the indicators for success ecotourism sites in Sabah and measures its' development stage. The long-term viability of tourism can be assured only when the limitations and favorable opportunities of the overall environment for tourism development are understood and ways to measure changes induced by tourism are identified and applied. This thesis applied qualitative methods which can help researchers to understand how and why such behaviors take place. The data were then analyzed to get the results, which are success indicators of ecotourism sites based on the perception of stakeholders. There are two set of the indicators are proposed. The indicators are quite consistent with those others drawn from the literature review. The analysis also shows that there are issues that need to be addressed with regards to these indicators. These indicators are output-based; therefore there is a need to establish the measurement or the parameters of these indicators to make it more quantifiable and more meaningful. Another aspect that the thesis identified is that the success level of each ecotourism site. Different development level of the ecotourism sites will use different strategic in their management. In the end of the thesis, the level of sites development will linked to the Butler's Model in determine the success level of the ecotourism sites. This will contribute to tourism literature by enhancing the knowledge of ecotourism, and to the ecotourism industry by providing a means of ecotourism success.

Keywords: Ecotourism; tourism; success indicators; Sabah, Butler's Model

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the world's largest industry. It accounts for more than 10% of total employment, 11% of global GDP and total tourist trips are predicted to increase to 1.6 billion by 2020 (WWF, 2001). Tourism is a global industry with a bearing on the lives of millions of people. Its potential as a tool for development is enormous with a growing interest to spend leisure time in nature and increasing awareness of environmentalism. Tourism development commonly has been advocated as an alternative to traditional natural resource-based economic development, such as timber production, agriculture, and mining. Recently, many advocates of tourism have promoted seemingly new tourism concepts, such as nature-based tourism, ecotourism, and sustainable tourism, among others. These new forms of tourism

are promoted as an environmentally safe way for rural communities to generate income from natural resources. They are advocated particularly in developing countries because many developing countries possess a comparative advantage over developed countries in their ability to provide relatively pristine natural settings (Cater 1993). Affluence, education, and environmentalism all contribute to increasing visitation to wild lands and generate income for local communities through the expenditures of tourists such as lodging, transportation, food, guides, and souvenirs (Laarman and Sedjo 1992). Demand for these new forms of tourism, it is argued, arises from increased concern or interest in unique and fragile ecosystems and a growing desire to travel to new and exotic places, and an increasing number of people who have the financial means to do so (Seidi 1994). However, recently it has a major and increasing impact on both people and nature. Thus, the effects can be negative as well as positive. Inappropriate tourism development and practice can degrade habitats and landscapes, deplete natural resources, and generate waste and pollution (WWF, 2001).

Research interest in these new forms of tourism has risen in the United States partly because of decreasing timber harvests and increasing recreation on national forest lands and the resulting impacts of these changes on local economies. Supply and demand projections for outdoor recreation into the next century suggest that quantities demanded will exceed supply for many activities including wildlife observation, primitive camping, backpacking, and nature study (English and others 1993). Although tourism and local economic development are not explicitly included in the mission of the USDA Forest Service, national forest management plans often include tourism development among stated goals (English and others 1993).

Most of the literature on tourism describes nature-based tourism (or nature tourism) as tourism activity generated by the existence of nature preserves, parks, and refuges. It is travel that primarily involves direct enjoyment of undisturbed natural environments (Valentine 1992, Weiler and Davis 1993). However, nature-based tourism seemingly could include what many would view as fairly mainstream tourism development ranging from large hotel and restaurant franchises intended to serve the needs of nature tourists for such activities as whale watching from cruise ships and visiting popular sites such as Mount Kinabalu. Most of the literature, however, qualifies nature-based tourism as being specifically concerned with the conservation or preservation of the "nature" on which the tourism is based. For many researchers, it is this qualification that distinguishes ecotourism from nature-based tourism (Valentine 1992, Weiler and Davis 1993).

The term ecotourism has been used as far back as 1965 (Fennell 1998). Gossling (1999) suggests that nature-based tourism is derived from the existence of natural areas with no specific concern for their protection, whereas ecotourism is concerned with the protection of natural areas. Gossling (1999) advocates ecotourism as a means to achieve rural economic development by enabling people who live in rural areas to capture the economic nonuse values derived from natural areas. Typical services offered at ecotourism destinations might include local arts and crafts, guided hikes and wildlife viewing, publications, natural history lectures, photography, and local food. Revenues are generated from fees for these services, as well as natural area user fees and local expenditures for hotels, restaurants and bars, and transportation services (Seidl 1994).

This paper tends to carry out the set of indicators of best understanding to measure the success of Sabah's ecotourism sites. This study aims to determine the development phase of the ecotourism sites by apply the Butler's Model. The Butler's model would then be compare

with the indicators carried out in this study to determine the development phase of each ecotourism sites.

This study focuses on Sabah's tour operators and also local communities that involve directly in the ecotourism sites. There are 31 licensed tour operators and 22 local communities have been interviewed. There are four ecotourism sites have been selected in this study. There are Sukau, Kampung Batu Puteh, Bukit Gemok and Tawau Hills Park. the sites selection are based on their types of activities, types of attractions, eco practices and level of protections of the sites.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Ecotourism

Ecotourism is characterized by its natural attractions, wildlife and wilderness habitats. Many countries favor ecotourism as a form of economic development as it is perceived as a low impact form of tourism. Ecotourism operations are generally small-scale, so are relatively easy to set up. Carefully planned and operated ecotourism sites, especially if it is village-based and includes local participation, is able to provide direct benefits that might offset pressure from other less sustainable activities that make use of natural and cultural resources (Pengiran Bagul, 2009).

Most of the previous researchers stated that the ecotourism is the practice of involving local community living around areas of a tourist attraction on the management and conservation of tourist attraction sites and the surrounding natural environment. The locals benefit economically from proceeds accruing from ecotourism, therefore the locals come to appreciate nature and conserve it for their own benefit. Therefore, this helps combat the issue of human-wildlife conflict, reduce cases of illegal killings of wild animals and destructions of the natural environment. Ecotourism is also a term generally used to describe responsible travel to areas where natural cultural or historical resources are managed and conserved to improve the well-being of the local community through accrued benefits.

In recent year, ecotourism destinations are always highlighted as environmentally sensitive because ecotourism activities directly involve various environmental phenomena including bird watching, trekking, mountaineering, horse riding and elephant riding within the forest wilderness trail, staying in natural caves, studying about flora and fauna, simple bushwalking, fishing, animal behavior study, ecological studies (Rahman,2010). Ecotourism always incorporates various activities in nature (hiking, mountain climbing, observing the living beings in their natural habitat, etc.), but it may include cultural activities, too. Ecotourism is an important educational component, it is a chance to learn respect for nature, for the local culture, and for some, and it is a chance to self-reflection being inspired by the beauty of the surroundings (Rahman (2010).

Ecotourism is a frequently debated term. Sometimes it is used simply to identify a form of tourism where the motivation of visitors and the sales pitch to them, centers on the observation of nature. Increasingly, this general sector of the market is called 'nature tourism'. True 'ecotourism', however, requires a proactive approach that seeks to mitigate the negative and enhance the positive impacts of nature tourism. The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people (TIES, 1990). This definition not

only implies that there should be a recognition of, and positive support for, the conservation of natural resources, both by suppliers and consumers, but also that there is a necessary social dimension to ecotourism (Pengiran Bagul, 2009).

Although ecotourism is not usually associated with a large number of visitors, its development in a given community over a long period of time can lead to a number of changes that may negatively affect the community's social, cultural and economic life and its natural environment. These changes might not be conspicuous, especially if the number of visitors is small or if ecotourism activities are not causing any substantial impacts. However, these types of changes tend to accumulate slowly and gradually over course of weeks, months or years, and can ultimately bring about huge and irreversible changes in the environment, deteriorating the living conditions of the local community. This is why it is essential that these changes be regularly observed and monitored to project future changes, follow trends of development, and establish controls and possibilities for regulation of undesirable processes (Buckley, 2003).

Chesworth (1995) stated that ecotourism has six characteristics. These are: a) ecotourism involves travel to relatively undisturbed natural areas and/or archeological sites, b) it focuses on learning and the quality of experience, c) it economically benefits the local communities, d) ecotourists seek to view rare species, spectacular landscapes and/or the unusual and exotic, e) ecotourists do not deplete resources but even sustain the environment or help undo damage to the environment, and f) ecotourists appreciate and respect local culture, traditions, etc. However, Rahman (2010) argued that it focuses primarily on experiencing and learning about nature, its landscape, flora, fauna and their habitats, as well as cultural artifacts from the locality. A symbiotic and complex relationship between the environment and tourist activities is possible when this philosophy can be translated into appropriate policy, careful planning, and tactful practicum (Rahman, 2010).

Though, it is possible to distinguish common denominators among the various definitions. One of them is the sustainability dimension consisting of economic, social and environmental factors. In this dimension, the major interest tends to be in the environmental aspect even though ecotourism usually distinguish from traditional tourism in case all of the three sustainability factors are combined (Beaumont, 2011). Besides, nature and learning are two additional dimensions of ecotourism, implying that these factors are important in attracting tourists to ecotourism activities. This means that tourists are appealed by ecotourism since it is perceived as a learning opportunity where to create a deeper understanding for other cultures and, at the same time, experience the biodiversity of a foreign nation without affecting it negatively (Beaumont, 2011). Thereby, conservation activities are an important aspect of the concept of ecotourism (Andersson Cederholm & Hultman, 2005).

2.2 Ecotourism Issues

Ecotourism has become an economic growth engine and vehicle for development in the region. This has not come without negative impacts particularly in mass tourism destinations but fortunately, 'nature-based' and 'eco' tourism have also seen rapid growth. Ecotourism and adventure tourism is growing annually by 10-30%, currently accounting for up to 25% of the world's tourist market according to the UNWTO. This provides an argument to minimize impacts of mass tourism in areas with high conservation value and invest instead in the preservation of natural areas and support for community stewardship over their reefs and coastal environments (WWF, 2014). Therefore, the set of impact and success indicators

of ecotourism is an instrument that assists in better understanding the impact of ecotourism on the environment. By monitoring these indicators, one can evaluate whether the overall objectives for ecotourism are being met. To define whether a given region is sustainable in terms of tourism development impacts, a number of indicators are needed showing the relationship between tourism activities and the capacity of the area to sustain these impacts (WWF, 2014).

Indicators help resource managers and others identify how communities change as a result of tourism development. Ecotourism is associated with the most valuable natural and cultural sites and phenomena in a given destination. Damage to these resources will undoubtedly be followed by economic losses for those whose livelihoods depend on tourism and by ecological and social losses for the whole local community. Thus, it is critically important for ecotourism to be developed in harmony with the environment, and businesses should play a leading role in establishing sustainable ecological and economic practices (Popova, 2003).

The studies on the success indicators of ecotourism industry and ecotourism sites are even more limited. Some studies that focus on success indicators are not specific to the ecotourism field, but rather on general tourism areas or some other specialized field such as sustainable tourism (WTO, 1996). Therefore, the measures and indicators that are available in tourism literature do not capture the intention of this research; however, they are useful in giving guidelines to the research (WTO, 1996).

The issue is interpreting and developing the indicators for success of ecotourism sites in Sabah. Ecotourism success is generally indicated by the health of its business operations since it is very much a business in nature. Other general success indicators are the positive impacts that it brought to the area and its community. A set of indicators for ecotourism site success that are based on this issue is valuable to the industry in reviewing their current plans and policies, and is useful in monitoring and evaluating current ecotourism projects (Pengiran Bagul, 2009).

2.3 Success Indicators for Ecotourism

Popova (2003) suggested that indicators showing impact and success of ecotourism can assist in the better understanding of the impacts of ecotourism on the environment. Evaluation on whether the overall objectives of ecotourism have been met can be achieved by monitoring these indicators. To define whether a given region is sustainable in terms of tourism development impacts, a number of indicators are needed showing the relationship between tourism activities and the capacity of the area to sustain these impacts.

According to Bhattacharya and Kumari (2004), there is a need to develop an applied tool to measure threshold of tourism impacts and change in socioeconomic and environmental status. This can be done through developing Criteria and Indicator (C&I) under the framework of sustainability. This should be a continuous process that encompasses society's responsibility towards sustainable livelihood generation through

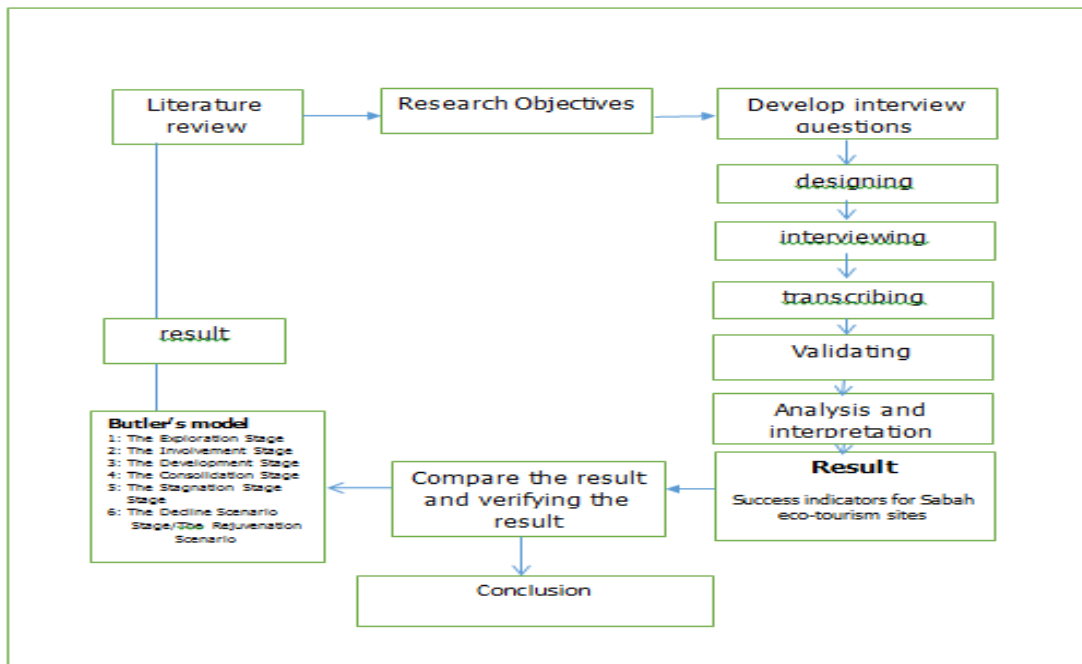
Community based ecotourism is a tourism activities without any environmental degradation and erosion of cultural values. Indicators are able to help managers and others to identify how communities change as a result of tourism development. Damage to the ecotourism resources could result in economic losses for those whose livelihoods depend on tourism and ecological and social losses for the local community (Pengiran Bagul, 2009).

Selecting broad indicators of environmental quality, management efforts or tourism sustainability is relatively straightforward. Possible indicator parameters are tabulated by Sirakaya (2001). Likewise, there are numerous research-level scientific studies of specific ecological impacts, reviewed by Buckley (2003) and manuals of ecological monitoring techniques. Effective indicators of significant recreational impacts on protected area ecosystems, however, which are scientifically meaningful and defensible as well as useful in practice management, are more difficult to select.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The paper employs an exploratory qualitative research that focuses on the success indicators for Sabah’s ecotourism sites. A qualitative approach of using semi-structure interview was chosen for data collection. The sample informants are tour operators and local community who involve in the ecotourism sites business. The sample size was determined when information and theoretical insights reached saturation, which constituted hearing the same information reported without any new information being added. There are 22 tour operators and 31 local communities have been interviewed.

Table 1: Research Framework



After furnishing a general introduction, an attempt is made a review the literature on the subject. The literature on various aspects of ecotourism is quite extensive. In order to find out major developments that took place in ecotourism, a brief review of existing literature on different aspects of ecotourism is made in this chapter. After review the literature by the previous research, the objectives would then be established. The researcher will develop the interview after the research objectives have been determined. The researcher would then interview the tour operator and local communities. The interview session will transcribe into manuscript and ready to validate by the respondents. The data would then be analyse and interpret.

4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS

A set of indicator that consists of eighteen general indicators have been carried out from this research. The indicators are quite consistent with those others drawn from the literature review. However the ranking of the indicators in table 2 are different compare with other research.

Table 2: Ecotourism Success Indicators

| NO | ECOTOURISM SITE SUCCESS INDICATORS |
|----|------------------------------------|
| 1 | Natural environment |
| 2 | Well manage facilities |
| 3 | High number of tourist |
| 4 | Repeat visitor |
| 5 | Site attractions |
| 6 | Clean |
| 7 | Good services |
| 8 | Convenience accessibility |
| 9 | Continuous conservation |
| 10 | No illegal logging |
| 11 | Efficient management |
| 12 | Popular |
| 13 | Local community participation |
| 14 | Enough Infrastructure |
| 15 | Positive experience |
| 16 | Clear and visible Interpretation |
| 17 | Effective promotion and marketing |
| 18 | The Long duration of stay |

This research has carried out eighteen general indicators as shown in Table 2. Majority of the general indicators that carried out in this research is similar with previous research. Pengiran Bagul (2009) in his research, he suggested twenty-one general indicators for the ecotourism sites. Zhao and Ou (2007) proposed six general indicators and Liu (2012) suggested five general indicators in his research. They are limited research related to the measurement of success indicators for ecotourism sites. However, majority of the researcher suggested the almost similar indicators. In this research, the general indicators are ranking according to the most repeated indicators mentioned by the respondents. Refer to the ranking of the indicators shown at the table 2, natural environment ranking number one among the entire indicators. During the interview session with the respondents, most of the respondent mentioned about the natural environment of the ecotourism sites. They are realized that the natural environment is the most valuable property in ecotourism sites. This is because the natural environment is the main attraction that attracts visitors to visit. Without the natural attraction, visitors will not visit to the sites effects also to the rest of the business in the ecotourism sites.

Well manage facilities ranking number two from the general indicators. Most of the respondents mentioned that well manage facilities is very important in enhance the satisfaction of the visitors and also one of the factor that visitors consider when visit to the sites. The well manages facilities like telephone line, internet excess, water, washroom and

even convenience store. All of the facilities are emphasized by the respondents and they believe this will enhanced the intention of the visitors to visit to the sites.

The third general indicator is high number of visitors. This indicator ranking among the highest, that's mean this indicator is very important in decided the successful of the ecotourism site. Ecotourism sites create many jobs for locals, bring in money for local economies, and support conservation efforts and raise awareness about cultural and environmental issues. It has also helped to preserve some species. That why many sites have sought to increase the number of tourists, but this objective slowly is giving way to increasing tourist expenditure (a positive benefit), which does not always require increasing the number of tourists. Hopefully, this objective will progress to one of increasing income generated in the region of the question (again, which need not involve an increase in expenditure). The respondents suggested that the high number of visitors will help them increase their income and also help them to improve their life.

The fourth general indicator for Sabah's ecotourism sites is repeating visitor. Understanding the needs and wants of a visitor in the hotel and tourism industry leads to success in accomplishing visitor satisfaction, this also leads to repeat purchase, intention to revisit, and potential for increased future patronage to the hotel and the destinations. The respondents suggested that repeat visitors are very important for them. This is because both sites have a very high number of visitors compared with others ecotourism sites. So, they expect that a repeat visitor is very important in determining whether their sites are a success.

The fifth indicator for Sabah's ecotourism site is site attraction. Tourist attraction is a place of interest where tourists visit, typically for its inherent or exhibited natural or cultural value, historical significance, natural or built beauty, offering leisure, adventure, and amusement. Respondents in these both sites mentioned that sites attraction is very important. Respondents mentioned that "Sukau are rich in their local cultural and also their local food delight. That why the visitors prefer to come to these sites because they would like to experience the difference with others". For example the second longer river in Malaysia also in this site, the river is very famous for their wildlife and flora and fauna. This attracts a lot of visitors to visit. Another respondent mentioned that, "Kampung Batu Puteh and Sukau almost shared same characteristics. This is because both site shared a same river called Sungai Kinabatangan, this river is rice with flora and fauna. Most of the tourists came here because of the river".

The sixth indicator is cleanliness. High cleanliness of the sites will enhance the intentions of tourist to visit the sites. "Clean" in this study included adequate air circulation and ventilation system, good smell and no dirty slough, clean and adequate water, the floor should be kept clean and dry, practice sanitation and hygiene principles and regular maintenance of the toilet premises. Cleanliness at the ecotourism sites is emphasized by the respondents. This is because they don't like visitors come with dissatisfaction and this also will affect the word of mouth of the visitors and also they wouldn't come back again.

The seventh indicator for Sabah's ecotourism sites is good service. Service quality as an assessment of whether the service delivered is compatible with the needs and requirements of customers. Service quality to be the overall evaluation of a specific service delivered by a firm as a result of comparing the firm's performance with a customer's general expectations of how firms in that industry should perform.

The eight indicators is convenience accessibility, Ecotourism accessibility and facilities are one of the factors that should consider by the elderly when visiting the ecotourism sites. Majority of the respondents suggested that the accessibility of the sites must be neither easier for elderly nor younger. This is because most of the visitors refuse to go because of the inconvenience accessibility of the sites. Respondent suggested "the management should consider some disabled people facilities and some accessible passengers for elderly, because some of them disabled people and trouble for them to access to the site". Entrance fees also one of the factors that considered by the visitors.

The ninth indicator for Sabah's ecotourism sites is continuous conservation. Continuous conservation should generate funds for conservation of the environment, to provide environmental education to the traveler to enable the economic empowerment of the local dependent communities and to foster respect for various cultures. Continuous conservation is one of the important indicators that suggested by them respondents at Sukau and Kampung batu Puteh. This is because the visitors come to the ecotourism sites because of the reserved forest and the natural environment. If the ecotourism sites have been destroyed and some dangerous species will extinct forever, then the visitors will not come again because there is no any attraction for them.

The tenth indicator is about illegal logging. The harvesting procedure itself may be illegal, including using corrupt means to gain access to forests; extraction without permission, or from a protected area; the cutting down of protected species; or the extraction of timber in excess of agreed limits. Respondents suggested that illegal logging is one of the indicators in determining the success of the ecotourism site. This is because the illegal logging activities normally destroyed the natural environment and harmful for some wild animal and flora and fauna. Respondent stated that "illegal logging will causes the entire wild animal like monkey, elephants and deer move their habitat away from the site. If the wild animals move away from the site, than the site no more attraction and the tourists would not visit again". Logging must be well-planned and not involved a large area of the reserved forest and must be far from ecotourism sites. It's also important after the logging activities, the replanting planned also must be implemented to avoid any negative impacts on the natural environment.

The eleventh indicator for Sabah's ecotourism sites is efficient management. The job of ecotourism managers is to minimize those impacts and ensure that, via ecotourism management strategies, the positive impacts outweigh the negative ones. Monitoring and managing visitor impacts are fundamental ecotourism management strategies; unfortunately, they are also ones most frequently left unattended. The efficient and effective management will bring the sites to a better way and may generate high income for the sites and also the local community. A poor management will affect the sites fewer visitors to visit and also local people can't obtain any benefits from the management. Respondent stated that "Management is very important to ensure the site operation is running smooth, management also have to ensure all of the parties involve get benefit with what they invest. Efficient management included site security, business allocation and business planning strategic".

The twelfth indicator for Sabah's ecotourism sites is popularity. The popularity of ecotourism is fueled by greater public awareness of the negative impacts of tourism be it on the destination or natural environment. There are strong indications that the popularity of new social media and satellite cable news played an important role as well. There is wide coverage of environment degradation and destruction, loss of biodiversity, natural calamities and climate change, of which scientists have in one way or another blamed not only the

tourism industry for their irresponsibility (more likely to be ignorance) but also the traveling consumers as well.

The thirteenth indicator is about local community participation. The involvement of a community in any ecotourism project is vital for the overall success of that project. This assertion and advocates for community participation as a tool for solving the problems of ecotourism in developing countries. The respondents stressed this indicator because there is more than 50 percent of the local community income depends on the visitors who visit the sites. They suggested that the most participation of the local community means that the sites are a success because the site's success in attract visitors to spend in the sites and indirectly increase their income. One of the respondent stated that "for now, we as a local community involve in any activities that held by the site. We are glad because we join the activities and we can earn money". Another respondent stated that "I involved in the site activities at least 3 times in a week. It's also depends, because I'm a farmer and I do have my own oil palm farm. I work as a part time tour operator when I'm free and this really can makes money".

The fourteenth indicator for Sabah's ecotourism sites is enough infrastructures. Successful ecotourism destination must be accessible. Therefore, tourism operators must invest in the infrastructure and telecommunication of the local and surrounding communities. This includes maintaining and upgrading roads, promoting sustainable means of transportation to and from the protected area, and building communications networks such as landline telephones, cellular phone towers and internet access. The importance lies in physically and remotely connecting tourists and the greater outside world to the local villages and protected area. Respondent recommended that "some infrastructures in this village should improve and upgrades. This is because many of the infrastructures in this site are outdated compare with other village.

The fifteenth indicator is about the positive experience of tourists. Eco tourists' experience is multidimensional. Respondents place particular emphasis on the ecotourism activities in which they physically engage at the sites and the natural environment in which they are located; their interaction with the site service staff; socialization with other Eco tourists, and the information acquired during the visit. To create a negative experience is very easy, a simple impolite sentence and poor service to the visitors will make the visitors dissatisfaction. But to create a positive experience for the visitors is a very challenging task.

The sixteenth indicator for Sabah's ecotourism sites is clear and visible interpretation. This indicator suggested by the respondents regarding the signage and information that should provide by the ecotourism sites. This is because, among the visitors, they also included the foreign visitors when the signage or the sign board stated only one language or local language, this will cause unnecessary trouble for the foreign visitors whose didn't know about that language. It should be stated multi language or international language so visitors from all of the countries will know about it. Information counter should be function and helpful to the visitors. This is because most of the visitors would like to get the right information at the counter rather than people around there. The information should help to the visitors and able to answer all of the inquiries for the visitors.

The seventeenth indicator for Sabah's ecotourism sites is effective promotion and marketing. There is a particular desire to see the more active promotion of the principles and values of ecotourism, to recipient communities and to the traveling public. There is a need for a stronger international campaign to make tourists aware of both the harmful and the beneficial impacts of their activities, and how this depends on their travel choice. This

could go beyond simply the generic message, with promotional support for relevant certification schemes and for activities such as donating to conservation causes in destinations visited. Respondents suggested that the promotion and marketing strategies planned by the management must be effective and it's also become one of the indicators in determining the success of the ecotourism sites. This is because the effective promotion and marketing strategies will attract visitors to visit the sites.

The last indicator for Sabah's ecotourism sites is a long duration of stay. The visitors who stay for a shorter period do not travel much except to visit only the major tourist attractions. Longer-stay visitors visit a wider range of attractions, explore more peripheral regions, and generate more diverse economic, social, and environmental impacts. Identifying the factors that make visitors stay longer thus benefits any destination seeking to increase visitor spending. That's mean the longest staying of the visitors at the sites, the sites consider success to attract the visitors to the sites and enjoy the environment there. Means that the sites do have a lot of activities to explore and visitors stay a long time to enjoy it.

All of the indicators mentioned above are rank according to the most repeated indicators mentioned by the respondents. The first indicator is the most repeated indicators by the respondents which is natural environment. Majority of the respondents mentioned that natural environment is the most important indicators in determine the success of the ecotourism sites. Without the natural environment, that's means there is no more main attraction or products in the sites. The last indicator is long duration of stay. This is the less repeated indicators by the respondents. This is because majority of the respondents not expect that tourists will stay overnight and stay long duration of time at the sites. They more prefer is tourists would spend more money to buy their products even just stay for one night.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

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hrough this research of success of Sabah's ecotourism sites, it can be concluded that the respondents still emphasized about the business perspective in the ecotourism sites. This is because more than fifty percent of the indicators mentioned by the respondents are related to business. There are not many different of the indicators with the previous indicators. The previous research mentioned about business and this research indicator also mentioned about the business indicators. However, the most important indicator or ranking number one indicator is about the natural environment. This is because recently, a lot of the forest and jungle at Sukau and Kampung Batu Puteh destroyed by illegal logging. There are also some critical issues that happened and raised the attention of the local community about the natural environment protection, for example the global warming, flood and extinct of some species animal. People start worried about the issues and alert with what happened around them. The entire issues happened will affect their business and also their daily activities.

As mentioned in earlier paragraph, another objective of this research is determination of the development phase of the ecotourism sites. The Butler's TALC model has been applied in this study to determine the development phase of the ecotourism sites. There are five stage of the development in Butler's model. There are exploration, involvement, development, consolidation and stagnation. Each of the development phases has their own justification and characteristics. Sukau and Kampung Batu Puteh both are in the stagnation phase. Tawau Hills Park is in the development phase. However, Bukit Gemok is in the exploration phase. The determination of each development phase is according to

the sites characteristics mentioned by the respondents and then compared with the Butler's model characteristics. This determination is very important in clearly defined the development phases of each sites and the management can plan their strategic to improve the sites development phase.

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