

Case Study on Habitat, Heritage, and Handicrafts for Indigenous Tourism Development in the Kuala Kangsar District, Malaysia

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Abstract

This paper aims to highlight the opportunities for developing indigenous tourism development attractions in the Kuala Kangsar district for the expanding inbound and outbound tourist destinations in Malaysia through eco-tourism, cultural heritage, and nature tourism exploration attractions. This will help improve the economic sustainability of the tribal communities. The findings of this study lead the author to the conclusion that the indigenous groups that are located in the districts of Kuala Kangsar are suffering from great poverty as a direct result of their low level of education as well as their long-standing tribal isolation in the interior of West Malaysia, which causes them to be reserved and introverted. In addition to this, it was discovered that 398 families with incomes of less than RM400 per month are considered to be living in extreme poverty and that these families require more than just reforms to the economic system because they own the natural resources.

Keywords: Indigenous, Indigenous Tourism, Indigenous Tourism Development

Introduction

Indigenous groups are non-dominant communities that are distinguished from dominant groups by their historical continuity with precolonial cultures, strong linkages to their land and natural resources, and different social, economic, and political systems, in addition to language, culture, and beliefs (Camargo et al., 2022). In recent years, indigenous cultures and tourism have become a powerful source of new tourist attraction, attracting the attention of entrepreneurs in the tourism industry, government agencies, and research academics. This has created an opportunity for indigenous tribes to gain economic independence and cultural protection from modern development (Fan et al., 2020). According to Swaikoski (2020), improved indigenous tourism strategic recovery plans should be devised in order to ensure the industry's continued survival in the long run. As a direct consequence of this, indigenous peoples face increased pressure to maintain their traditional ways. The ever-evolving global

environment, as stated by Wu et al (2020), necessitates that indigenous people integrate into the global economy while simultaneously preserving and strengthening indigenous community culture in order to acquire an economic advantage that is competitive.

According to Manickam (2015), Malaysia's indigenous people are linked to indigeneity between "orang asli" and "malay race," as is typically described through knowledge of racial identification and connection. There are 11,469 indigenous people living in the Kuala Kangsar district, the majority of them are Temiar (10,723) and Semai (746). There are 2,701 families dispersed across 9 Kuala Kangsar subdistricts and 58 villages that are inhabited by "Orang Asli," which literally translates to "indigenous people." According to Masron et al (2013), the Semai community is more prevalent in the state of Perak. Semai are divided by anthropologists into two categories, Highland Semai and Lowland Semai, depending on their geographic location. Hunting, fishing, gathering, and swidden farming are all examples of activities that are ideally suited for the Highland Semai since they entail the management of forest resources. The Lowland Semai have historically maintained a peasant way of life, consisting of active participation in the labour force and the pursuit of employment in the small-scale trade of jungle produce. However, they are now more likely to be exposed to the modern economy.

The Temiar, on the other hand, dwell primarily in the interior, with the exception of one lowland community, Kampung Bendang Kering in Kuala Kangsar. Originally, the temiar engaged in hunting and gathering as well as swidden cultivation. Historically, the Semai and Temiar engaged in free trade; they were the primary suppliers of jungle produce. According to Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA), 2,694 villages, or 23% of the total population, are poor. Presently, 1,820 of these Orang Asli earn less than RM760 per month, while 874 live in extreme poverty, earning less than RM460. These figures are extraordinarily high because Malaysia has a poverty index of 6%, which means that these people have the highest percentage of the poorest household income (D. O. S., 2015).

According to Kamaruddin and Ngah (2007); Abdullah-Wendt (2008), indigenous populations in peninsular Malaysia rely on jungle resources for survival and economic activities. It is hoped that the National Tourism Policy (NTP) 2020-2030 will make tourism development a key component of the impoverished community development agenda, harmonising with the purpose of the JAKOA strategic plan 2021-2026. As a result, not only does this study provide rich data that can improve the livelihood of the Temiar and Semai communities, provide a source of employment and business opportunities, but it also assists the Kuala Kangsar indigenous community in identifying new tourism products of cultural heritage and experiential attraction in economic activities into developing indigenous tourism attractions, which can improve existing guidelines for authorities, particularly the state government and local governments.

Indigenous Tourism Development

Indigenous tourism, also known as ethnic or tribal tourism, is defined as "tourism that respects, preserves, and perpetuates the cultural traditions and cherished values of a particular people while facilitating economic development in those communities visited" (Pabel et al., 2017). Pabel et al (2017) state that supply factors like heritage planning, economic needs, and cultural revival, as well as demand factors like tourists' desire for cultural and authentic experiences or entertainment, are all contributing to the growth in indigenous tourism. Therefore, it is expected that indigenous tourism would give both

individually meaningful and practical experiences, as well as an image of authentic and representative indigenous experiences that will draw tourists to a destination.

Indigenous tourism may be viewed by some as a subset of ecotourism. Numerous definitions of indigenous tourism exist. Indigenous tourism is defined by Hinch and Butler (2009) as "tourism activity in which indigenous peoples are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction" and must include the four "H's" in their tourism products, which are habitat, handicrafts, heritage, and history. According to Johansena and Mehmetoglu (2011), indigenous tourism products predominantly consist of four elements: (1) habitat, (2) handicrafts, (3) heritage, and (4) history, and these elements are for the experiences and perceptions of influence of tourists. Moreover, according to Leu (2019), the perceptions of tourists regarding the benefits and values of indigenous tourism will influence the future development of indigenous tourism. In this way, tourist preferences for indigenous activities influence destination development, and culturally acceptable products can be produced (Camargo et al., 2022).

There are both positive and negative effects of tourism on economies, societies, and ecosystems when indigenous tourism first begins to develop (Walker et al., 2016). He made an observation that the improvement of indigenous peoples is aided by the increasing interest in indigenous culture as a tourist attraction. Therefore, indigenous tourism helps indigenous people become economically self-sufficient by generating new jobs for them. Furthermore, exhibiting culture to tourists, as stated by Walker et al (2016), can inspire indigenous people with a renewed sense of pride in their cultural heritage. However, it is critical to acknowledge that there are deficiencies in the growth of indigenous peoples' tourism. When economies grow, they might spread wealth unevenly or cause jobs to leave the area. Without careful planning, indigenous tourism can have a devastating effect on local ecosystems and way of life (Fletcher et al., 2016). Since indigenous people placed a high importance on maintaining their cultural identity, it is essential that this be taken into account with the expansion of the tourism industry.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study can be classified as exploratory. In-depth interviews with personnel of the JAKOA Kuala Kangsar office and the designated indigenous groups of Pos Kuala Mu and Pos Yum in the Kuala Kangsar district of Perak were part of this study's qualitative methodology. Those from Kampong Ulu Gapeh's Pos Kuala Mu Tok Batin, Kampong Hilir Gapeh's Batin Razali, Kampong Bersh's Batin Hadu, and Kampong Yum's Pos Yum Batin Pandak took part in the interview. Fifteen villages have participated in the chalet-building project since 2017. This group also includes three representatives from Jawatan Kuasa Kampong (JKK), three chalet operators, and three chalet workers. The Temiar sub-tribe of the Senoi, which includes both Pos Kuala Mu and Pos Yum, is the most populous of Peninsular Malaysia's 18 indigenous peoples.

Purposive sampling was used. According to Etikan et al (2016), purposeful sampling is utilised in qualitative research to acquire rich information from an identified and selected case using practical resources available to the researcher. Purposive sample was also chosen on purpose by the researcher due to the characteristics of the key informants who best met the requirements. The decision to adopt purposive sampling was influenced by the availability and willingness of the participants, as well as their capacity to articulate opinions relevant to the research problem. Owing to the cultural features of the participants, including their

willingness and availability, the purposive sample procedures of homogeneous sampling and critical case sampling were adopted.

Results

Indigenous Habitats – Pos Kuala Mu

Table 1

Pos Kuala Mu Classification

1) Village Name	2) POS Kuala Mu (430.1 Hectares)									
	Name of Batin	Gender		Tribes		Religion		No. of Poverty	Economic Activity	
		Male	Female	Temiar	Others	Islam	Animism		Cocoa (Hectares)	Rubber (Hectares)
Kg. Bersah	Hadu bin Long	105	93	194	4	66	132	47	12	53.2
Kg. Toh	Jamal bin Ngah	81	93	167	7	10	164	35	12	32.3
Kg. Kuala Mu	Karim bin Busu	80	111	189	2	82	109	41	12	41.8
Kg. Gapeh Hulu	Razali bin Erek	69	71	140	-	7	133	27	6	34.2
Kg. Gapeh Hilir	-	60	69	129	-	9	120	28	6	34.2
Total		395	437	819	13	174	658	178	48	195.7

Pos Kuala Mu Indigenous Habitats

Pos Kuala Mu is situated in the Piah Forest Reserve, approximately one hour's journey from Sungai Siput. Pos Kuala Mu's subdistrict consists of five villages with a total population of approximately 832: Kampong Bersah, Kampong Gapeh Hulu, Kampong Gapeh Hilir, Kampong Toh, and Kampong Kuala Mu. The total area is 430.1 hectares, of which 195.7 hectares are developed for rubber farming, 48 hectares are developed for cocoa farming, and 186.4 hectares remain undeveloped. Rubber and cacao are the primary sources of income for rural communities. Historically, the Pos Kuala Mu community supported itself through cultivation and other kampung-related activities. However, they are now operating in a new field and gaining new knowledge. Since 2017, the Orang Asli community comprising the Temiar has not squandered the area's tourism potential.

According to Kampong Bersah Batin Hadu Long, who oversees the management of the three chalet ventures, the chalets were all developed by a total of 100 people aged 19 to 45 from the community-built chalets on three sites called Bersah Chalet, Dusun Chalet, and Kampung Gapeh Campsite to attract tourists. The chalets at Pos Kuala Mu are one-of-a-kind, constructed exclusively from forest materials such as bamboo and bertam (a palm-family

plant that thrives in the forest), and have attracted significant crowds on weekends and during school breaks. With 40 chalets and ten camping sites, the indigenous tourism economic development was established. Kampong Bersah marked the construction of 20 chalets in 2017. Youth added and constructed 20 chalets in Kampong Kuala Mu and 10 camping sites in Kampong Ulu Gapeh in 2018 in response to an increase in demand, in an effort to increase community income. Other villagers are able to generate additional income from the sale of agricultural products such as tapioca, sweet potatoes, and vegetables, as well as handicrafts, to tourists as a result of spillover effects.

Unfortunately, according to the statistics report from JAKOA (2018), the number of Pos Kuala Mu poverty indicates 178 of the Temiar household community earned an average income less than RM400 per month and classified as the extreme poverty level in which their income was below the poverty line for Peninsular Malaysia, which is RM460 per month.

Pos Kuala Mu's most valuable asset is Mother Nature's exceptional beauty, which is reflected in the itinerary of the JAKOA ecotourism programme. In order to provide guests with a more immersive and enriching ecotourism experience, the chalet owners plan to provide more amenities and activities. Pos Kuala Mu is anticipated to become the first Orang Asli settlement in the Kuala Kangsar district to be withdrawn from the category of extreme poverty by 2025, with each family earning at least RM760 per month as a result of their ecotourism activities.



Figure 1: Pos Kuala Mu Economic Activity

Pos Yum's Indigenous Habitats

Pos Yum, another Orang Asli village in Sungai Siput, was included in the JAKOA's eco-tourism programme itinerary. Pos Yum is made up of five villages: Kampong Pos Yum, Kampong Pendeq, Kampong Mangyes, Kampong Kotai, and Kampong Beswok, which is where the road ends. Cocoa is the village's principal source of income. The total area is 1619.4 hectares, of which 151 hectares are developed with cocoa growing from all five villages of Pos Yum, as indicated in Figure 2. Just 9% of the reserved land given by the Perak state government was developed for agriculture by the community. Due to ownership and land title deeds that are still pending from the states, 91% of the forest is still reserved. If the Temiar community develops the land without the state government's authority, an RM25,000 fine would be imposed on the offender who caused the community to leave the area undeveloped.

Pos Yum has a population of 917 people, 914 of whom are Temiar tribes. The neighbourhood has 220 reported families, 220 of which are in extreme poverty, with an average monthly income of less than RM400. The region is 41 kilometres from Lintang Town, Pulau Kimiri, and 51 kilometres from Kampong Beswok, where the road ends. They have plenty of water and electricity. Tok batin Pandak of Pos Yum and its villagers decided in 2018 to build 30

indigenous chalets and form the village cooperative "Koperasi Maju Asal Sungai Siput (U) Berhad (KOMASS)" to boost community revenue in Kampung Yum and Kampong Pendeq. Pos Yum's natural and cultural resources are greater than Pos Kuala Mu's because they have a breathtakingly beautiful waterfall of Lata Pendeq and rivers along the kampong area, which prompted the community to build 30 chalet projects in Kampong Pos Yum and Lata Pendeq in 2018 and in Kampong Beswok by 2020, which could lift the community out of extreme poverty. Locals are flocking to these two sub-districts to witness Temiar indigenous culture and life in its natural surroundings.

Table 2
Pos Yum Classification

		5) POS Yum (1619.4 Hectares)								
3) 4) Village Name	Name of Batin	Gender		Tribes		Religion			No. of Poverty	Economic Activity
		Male	Female	Temiar	Others	Islam	Animism	Baha' i		Cocoa (Hectares)
Kg. Yum	Pandak bin Liong	120	137	256	1	236	21		59	39
Kg. Mangyes	Alang bin Pandak	93	82	174	1	43	131	1	46	13
Kg. Kotai	Ahmad bin Along	96	84	180		104	76		47	12
Kg. Pendeq	Pamdak bin Liong	5	16	20	1	2	19		4	12
Kg. Beswok	Mohd Daud bin Anjang	140	144	284		30	195	59	64	75
Total		454	463	914	3	415	442	60	220	151



Figure 2: Pos Yum Economic Activity

Heritage History of Indigenous Peoples

When researching the essence of Pos Kuala Mu and Pos Yum's indigenous heritage history, the Temiar community was asked what the term heritage meant to them. Several respondents cited their way of life as a significant part of their ancestry. Many individuals believed that the phrase indigenous heritage should allude to the uniqueness of things that do not exist anywhere else and that people from all over the world might enjoy. Sadly, when asked to cite an example of Pos Kuala Mu or Pos Yum history, most had no idea. At the moment, the indigenous community does not appear to be able to relate a unique meaning of indigenous heritage on a personal level; thus, the batin of Pos Kuala Mu and Pos Yum must develop a strategy for creating brand resonance as the key identifying elements of indigenous tourism, as shown in Figures 3 and 4.



Figure 3: Pos Kuala Mu Indigenous Tourism



Figure 4: Pos Yum Indigenous Tourism

Handicrafts from Indigenous Peoples

Handicraft products, according to Grobar (2017), reflect culture, hereditary skills, knowledge, and the beauty of heritage. Hence, looking at the concrete handicrafts displayed in Figure 5 is one method to grasp the intangible culture portrayed in crafts. The transfer of skills, techniques, and information from one generation to the next is critical. Regrettably, handicraft activity at Pos Kuala Mu and Pos Yum are casual.

Since most people living in rural areas work in agriculture, it might be difficult to find the time to devote to the labour-intensive process of producing handicrafts. Furthermore, most young indigenous people are unwilling to inherit traditional lacquer basket craftsmanship due to the complexity and length of the production process and the difficulty in finding a great trainer who is willing to teach, as many traditional crafts contain "secret methods" and various artisans are unwilling to pass such secrets to strangers if their family members are not willing to learn, which could lead to the eradication of such knowledge. Furthermore, this study identifies a number of challenges and constraints that the handicraft heritage of Pos Kuala Mu and Pos Yum faced due to a lack of consensus in identifying and categorising handicrafts, a lack of adequate data, a reluctant young generation, a lack of modern technology and innovative educational and training facilities, and financial limitations, among other things. These studies provided support for the claim made by Camargo et al (2022) that indigenous people are disproportionately represented in low-wage occupations that contribute to the maintenance of postcolonial patterns of exploitation, discrimination, and ethnic prejudice that have undermined their self-respect and sense of worth.



Figure 5: Indigenous Handicrafts

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper comes to the conclusion, based on the findings, that Pos Kuala Mu and Pos Yum are living in extreme poverty due to a lack of education and a long period of isolation within the interior of West Malaysia, which causes them to be introverts and shy. It recorded 398 Temiar households earning less than RM400 per month, which is below the extremely poor line of RM460 per month. These households require not only economic change through an indigenous tourism project, as they have the natural resources and activities to not only aid in the construction of indigenous enterprises but also to promote their long-term growth and sustainability, Government-initiated policies to stimulate the formation of indigenous entrepreneurial tourism and novel methods of poverty alleviation are required.

These policies should stimulate the formation of indigenous entrepreneurial tourism. As a consequence of this, one of the future recommendations for the indigenous tourism development of Pos Kuala Mu and Pos Yum includes the establishment of an indigenous tourism network to improve unity and control over destination development. Indigenous people ought to be aware of the fact that in order for a company to continue to function effectively and remain competitive, the quality of its tourism-related services and goods must be of a high standard.

Therefore, in order to provide visitors with an ecotourism experience that is more immersive and provides added value, the researcher suggests that chalet operators provide more facilities and activities, adding more value and enhancing their guests' ecotourism experience by introducing them to local foods and handicrafts. In addition, the researcher suggests that chalet operators provide more value to their guests' ecotourism experience by introducing them to local foods and handicrafts.

In order for members of the Temiar community to be educated to produce high-quality items that may be sold in tourist destinations, it is necessary for the Temiar community to first determine the types of handicrafts practised by the various native communities. In addition, the owners and operators of the chalets should be given training on how to provide excellent service to their guests, how to properly organise the rooms, and how to offer additional facilities such as the rental of bicycles and motorbikes. In addition, in order to develop indigenous ecotourism ventures into an industry that is

resilient enough to withstand challenges, it is essential for indigenous peoples, particularly the younger generation, to receive a solid education in indigenous knowledge. This includes learning to speak English so that they can interact with foreign tourists. In addition, the creation of ground-breaking items would be of great assistance to the indigenous tourism industries of Pos Kuala Mu and Pos Yum in achieving a stable position with reduced levels of rivalry.

The next step will be to focus on attracting tourists from other countries, given that indigenous culture is frequently more interesting to travellers from other countries than it is to travellers from the same country's home country, and given that there is possibility of extending marketplaces to accommodate tourists from other countries. Therefore, indigenous tourism in Pos Kuala Mu and Pos Yum contains excellent opportunities for continuous expansion; consequently, it is essential to keep this in mind and engage with stakeholders to minimise obstacles and conflicts.

In summary, indigenous research makes a significant theoretical and contextual contribution to the current knowledge base. It contributes to knowledge by embracing multiple knowledge systems, challenging power dynamics, and encouraging epistemic diversity. Indigenous research promotes a more holistic and relevant knowledge of social problems by emphasising cultural context and community interaction. Finally, it contributes to social justice, decolonization, and indigenous community empowerment.

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