

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**LOCAL TOURIST INTENTIONS
TOWARDS COMMUNITY-BASED
TOURISM IN KOTA BELUD, SABAH:
A THEORY OF PLANNED
BEHAVIOUR APPROACH WITH
SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MODERATOR**

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on community-based tourism (CBT), one of the key drivers toward sustainable rural development that offers local economic and cultural benefits. It explores the factors that influence local tourists' intentions toward visiting CBT destinations using the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which consists of three major aspects: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, while also integrating social media usage as a moderating effect within the rural tourism context of Kota Belud, Sabah. A quantitative approach was employed using a structured survey based on validated TPB frameworks. The survey captured the TPB aspects and social media usage on a 5-point Likert scale. Data were collected from 261 respondents via convenience sampling, achieving a response rate of 74.6%. Reliability was confirmed via a pilot test with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.70. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyze TPB relationships and moderating effects. Perceived behavioural control was statistically observed to be the strongest predictor of behavioural intention, indicating the importance of logistical convenience. Subjective norms were also statistically significant in influencing behavioural intentions, highlighting the role of collectivist social influences. Attitude had a positive yet weaker impact, while the moderating factor of social media usage was statistically insignificant that suggest offline influence still dominates in a rural CBT setting. Theoretically, the findings reinforce the applicability of TPB in explaining local tourist behaviour, while questioning the strength of digital influence in collectivist rural contexts. Practically, this study offers insights for tourism stakeholders to prioritize logistical accessibility and offline engagement strategies to enhance CBT participation. The overall understanding reveals a nuanced perspective of how local tourists perceive CBT in Kota Belud, providing a foundation for future research to refine and solidify this area of literature.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

This chapter introduces the purpose and scope of the study. It outlines the background, problem statement, research objectives, questions, scope, operational definitions, and the theoretical basis of the research. The chapter aims to establish a clear context for the study by highlighting existing gaps in the literature, particularly concerning the influence of social media on local tourists' behavioural intentions within the framework of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). It also explains how the moderating role of social media, especially in relation to subjective norms, frames the study's novelty. These discussions form the basis for the research framework and methodology applied in later chapters.

1.2 Research Background

Kota Belud, a rural district in Sabah, Malaysia, is rich in cultural heritage, natural landscapes, and traditional community life. Known for its cultural villages, eco-tourism trails, and local festivals, it holds significant potential for developing Community-Based Tourism (CBT). Despite these strengths, awareness of CBT among local tourists remains low, and interest in conventional tourism products often outweighs the appeal of community-oriented experiences (Kunjaraman, 2022; Ramli & Badarulzaman, 2023). Sabah's tourism sector has largely focused on international markets, while the domestic segment, particularly local Sabahans remains underexplored. Promoting CBT in Kota Belud thus requires a clearer understanding of what motivates local tourists and how their behavioural intentions are shaped.