



**FACTORS AFFECTING THE PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL  
COMMUNITIES IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY:  
A CASE STUDY ON RUMAH MERAN / LOAGAN BUNUT,  
TINJAR,  
MIRI DIVISION.**

**SIGAR MALANG**

**2001320669**

**BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
WITH HONOURS (MARKETING)  
FACULTY OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT  
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA SARAWAK  
KOTA SAMARAHAN**

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## ABSTRACT

The livelihood of the people of Loagan Bunut longhouse or Rumah Meran are changing due to a need of financing the rebuilding of their longhouse, increasing emigration of younger males to town/ city areas, diversification of economic activities with increasing weight on wage-jobs and a decrease in farming area. This is further influenced by insecurity in terms of land tenure after Loagan Bunut National Park was gazette and other land developments like oil palm plantations. They also depend heavily on *selambau* fishing for income in unsustainable way.

The aim this study is to assess the participation of local communities particularly in tourism sector and to analyze the potential of business opportunities in Loagan Bunut hopefully to provide alternative ways to improve their standard of living.

The study discovered that 95.6% of the respondents were Berawan, 76.9% were males, 50.6% aged between 31-50 years old, 65.9% were married, 86.9% were Christian, 75.9% with SJC/LCE/PMR level and below, 60.4% farmers and 69.2% earning below RM1,000 per month.

Their current tourism related activities include river/lake cruise, jungle trekking, canteen and homestay program operator. Out of 91 respondents, 4 are still actively involved with the above activities. The rest involve themselves on a part-time basis or none at all.

The major factors that hinder local community participation in tourism sector is mainly due to the poor infrastructure especially the road condition that is poorly maintained, telecommunication is still not reliable, water supply create problem during dry season and power supply is not sufficient. The other factor is human capital that needs immediate consideration as they lack knowledge in tourism management and

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of Study

This study was done in Loagan Bunut National Park and more specific the Berawan community of Rumah Meran/ loagan Bunut longhouse, Tinjar, in the Miri Division of Sarawak, Malaysia. The study was aimed at evaluating the marketing/ business opportunities in tourism sector of the local community of Rumah Meran/ loagan Bunut longhouse and their interactions with the Loagan Bunut national Park. After much emphasis on '*save loagan Bunut, haven under threat*' a joint by UNDP, GEF, Sarawak Forestry Department and the government, tourism activities became more acceptable to the community as they discovered supplemental incomes from tourism related activities more beneficial. This can be seen through some members venturing into tourism related businesses such as running a small resort, providing guide services, boat ride on the lake, visit cultural heritage sites, jungle hike and others.

#### 1.1.1 Loagan Bunut National Park

Loagan Bunut National Park was gazetted on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1990 that covers an area approximately 650 hectare which is located in the northeastern part of Sarawak in the upper reaches of Sungai Bunut where Sarawak's largest natural lake was found. The water level is totally dependent on the water level of Sungai Bunut, Tinjar and Baram. It fluctuates throughout the year and usually the lowest water levels are in February and May or June. When the dry periods are at their peak, Loagan Bunut can become a huge expanse of dry cracked mud. The lake and its surrounding areas are vibrant and scenic; both during high and low water levels. A major cultural attraction at the lake is the unique and traditional method of fishing *selambau*, which has been retained by the

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study has reviewed the following literatures:

#### **2.1 Tourism Business**

Tourism business is one of the biggest global industries. According to WTO, 596 million trips in 1996 with an increase of 5.5% compared to 1995 or 77% more compared to 1985. In terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it represents approximately 11% of the world GDP or USD7.2 trillion in 2005 and estimated about 300 million people are employed in the tourism sector.

Source: Excerpt taken from Paper 1 of Workshop on Tourism Awareness for The Orang Ulu Community, 5-6 February 1999 - *Introduction to the Travel Industry* by Encik Abbas Said, University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)

#### **2.2 Tourism and the world economy**

International tourism receipts represented in 2003 approximately 6 percent of worldwide exports of goods and services (as expressed in US dollars). When considering service exports exclusively, the share of tourism exports increases to nearly 30 percent.

Tourism demand depends above all strongly on the economic conditions in major generating markets. When economies grow, levels of disposable income will usually also rise. A relatively large part of discretionary income will typically be spent on tourism, in particular in the case of emerging economies. A tightening of the economic situation on the other hand, will often result in a decrease or trading down of tourism spending.