SOCIAL and MANAGEMENT RESEARCH JOURNAL

Institute of Research Management & Innovation (IRMI)

© UiTM Press, UiTM 2016

SOCIAL and MANAGEMENT RESEARCH JOURNAL

Institute of Research Management & Innovation (IRMI)

Achieving Social Justice through Hybrid Rural and Urban Model of Community Based Tourism: A Conceptual Framework

[1]Nuraisyah Chua Abdullah, [2]Ramzyzan Ramly

[1]Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA, 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
[2]Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Universiti Teknologi MARA,
40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
[1]E-mail: nuraisyahc@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The governments of many countries have identified Community Based Tourism (CBT) in rural tourism as a catalyst for the development of rural community. Urban poverty in many countries including Malaysia and Cambodia is due to rural-urban migration. The natural population growth in urban areas is an increasingly visible phenomenon in these countries. Hence, this paper aims to suggest the inclusion of the existing concept of community based tourism (CBT) into the urban setting as a supplement to the existing concept, which is dominant in the rural setting. Using Malaysia and Cambodia as a case study, it is the contention of this paper that the hybrid rural and urban community based tourism would better facilitate social justice in tourism destinations.

Keywords: *community, tourism, rural, urban, social justice*

INTRODUCTION

George et al. [1] defines community based tourism (CBT) as tourism that takes environmental, social and cultural sustainability into account. CBT which is managed and owned by the community, for the community, runs in parallels with broader participatory planning and development of greater community control philosophies (Ife, 1996) [2] and community development where sustainable and active communities based on social justice and mutual respect are built. (Gilchrist, 2003) [3]. Thus community development explicitly seeks to develop emancipatory collective responses and dismantle the structural barriers to participation on local issues. However, most of the literature discusses CBT in the context of rural development. (Wearing and McDonald, 2002 [4]; Johnson, 2010 [5])

It is interesting to note that the concept of community participation which is popular in the context of ecotourism seems to expand to the urban context where in the last decade, discussions were forthcoming on the potential for urban ecotourism (Orams, 1995) [6] and its importance has been highlighted (Gibson et al, 2003 [7]; Higham & Luck, 2002 [8]; Kastelein, 2004 [9]). Tourist destinations in cities are growing and the cities became predominant sites of poverty, hence this leads to the idea that tourism should contribute to urban poverty reduction. Therefore, it is the contention of this paper that CBT in the existing rural context should be viewed alongside with the urban context.

Revisit of the Urban-Rural Concepts

In Malaysia and Cambodia, urban and rural areas are not legally defined administrative areas but are statistically defined to distinguish areas with certain socio-economic characteristics. Urban areas in both countries have gone through different definitions over the years after independence; more frequently in Malaysia in 1970, 1980, 1991 and 2010 Population Census [10] as compared to Cambodia [11]. However, both countries share similar characteristics in their definitions, i.e. factors of population size and built-up areas, hence the areas of rural and urban is subject to change with the change of the characters in the population census.

Re-Modelling Rural and Urban Poor

In Malaysia, poverty rates dropped in both urban and rural areas, with the record of urban poverty 1% last year compared to 1.7% in 2009, while rural areas registered a significant drop from 8.4 in 2009 to 3.4% in 2012. Poverty in the rural areas has also been on the downtrend from 60% in 1970 to 11.4% in 2002. Urban poverty is relatively lower, i.e. 22.3% in 1970 and dropped to 2% in 2002. [12]

Urban poverty in Malaysia nowadays is an increasingly visible phenomenon due to natural population growth in urban areas and rural-urban migration. Unwanted effects of development leads to the change of dimensions and emerging new forms of poverty and as a result, it is argued that there is a dire need to re-examine and re-visit urban poverty in Malaysia. It is debated that the income line approach often does not represent an appropriate yardstick of poverty measurement and should not be used as a measurement of poverty. (Sulaiman et al., 2014) [13]

The figure for absolute poverty in Cambodia has declined slightly compared to previous levels. However, if a poverty line of $5 a day is postulated, poverty has increased marginally. Although per capita gross national income is $820, which is an improvement compared to 2010, it is argued that it remains the second lowest in the region. More than 90% of the country's poorest citizens live in rural areas. (Stiffung, 2014) [14] In Cambodia, in 2004, 89% of poor households lived in rural areas and the percentage increased to 91% by 2011. (Asian Development Bank, 2014) [15]

Since the Royal Government of Cambodia lacks the budget for rural development, there is a growing gap between rural and urban areas. More attention has been focused on urban development especially Phnom Penh, though the Cambodian Government has regarded the rural development as one of the priorities. [16] However, in Phnom Penh, urban poor communities have grown as informal settlements at multiple locations especially in slum areas in Phnom Penh, having sprung up. [17]

CBT and Social Justice

Poverty alleviation is in line with social justice, and a matter of human right. (Sen, 2005) [18] The fundamental principle of social justice requires fair access to goods and services. The concept of equality in democratic societies ensures an equal voice for all citizens in the decision-making process. [19] It is submitted that the decision-making process would be facilitated by the hybrid concept of CBT, where the rural and the urban society have equal opportunity to be involved in the process.

A top national priority in achieving social justice should be active participation by the State and society in national measures to combat extreme poverty and improve the redistribution of wealth amongst its communities. [20] Participation in the context of social justice within the context of CBT means involving local communities in tourism decisions that indirectly and directly impacts their lives. More specifically, the rationale for public participation in rural and urban tourism is twofold: (1) achieving better tourism distributive outcomes, and (2) strengthening democracy. The idea of participation is linked to power, whereby participation is believed to shift existing power in traditionally weak and marginalised groups and individuals in rural and urban into a stronger position vis-à-vis other actors, including social and public institutions. In their definition, Jost and Kay (2014) [21] stipulate that social justice is a state of affairs (either actual or ideal) in which (a) benefits and burdens in society are dispersed in accordance with some allocation principle (or set of principles); (b) procedures, norms and rules that govern political and other forms of decision-making preserve the basic rights, liberties, and entitlements of individuals and groups; and (c) human beings are treated with dignity and respect not only by authorities but also by other relevant social actors, including fellow citizens." [22] It is to be noted that the 'individuals', 'groups' and 'society' here refer to the community at large, irrespective of rural or urban community and as such, CBT should be equally applied in the rural and urban settings.

Debate on Definition of Community

There are many literature which discuss the usage of the term 'community', however, the conceptual difficulties of the term are rarely discussed (Liepins, 2000 [23]; Amit & Rapport, 2002 [24]) critically studied

community as a methodological, theoretical, phenomenological, political and legal construct. The concept is viewed to be too vague, too variable in its applications, hence leading to the "slipperiness" of the concept.

Within the context of CBT, Salazar (2011) [25] highlights the difficulty in defining "community" which is commented to be a very elusive and vague term. It is argued that the term is used to refer to not only a locality (for example, a village community) but also a network of relationships (for example, cyberspace communities). [26] A narrow view of the term community may lead to limited empirical research and theory, especially when out-dated notions of collectivities as fixed in time and space is adopted or when community is viewed as a unity, as an undifferentiated thing with intrinsic powers that speaks with a single voice. [27]

The approach of adopting CBT in both rural and urban context would eliminate the difficult task of the defining 'community' in the context of community based tourism.

CBT Contribution to Rural and Urban Development

In Malaysia, rural tourism per se may have existed for a long time with the development of a number of nature-based and cultural-based tourism products in rural areas. However, it has only received recognition as a tourism product with the launching of the Rural Tourism Master Plan in 2001. A market survey undertaken to formulate the master plan indicated that foreign tourists who came to Malaysia spent 15% of their stay in rural areas. In 2013 there were 350,974 visitors who participated in the Homestay programme nationwide (which is a clear example of CBT in rural areas) with a turnover of RM21.6 million as compared to 325,000 visitors with a turnover of RM18 million during the same period in 2012. [28] CBT is clearly illustrated in homestay programmes where for example, in Kampung Pelegong Homestay in Negeri Sembilan, the involvement of CBT led to the socio-economic development of the community. The increase of tourist arrivals in Kampong Pelegong contributed to the income for the community. In general, the monthly income which is around RM600-RM800 – and of homestay programmes is the third most important additional income for the

community. In the first quarter of 2005, some homestay operators managed to earn from about RM2,000 to RM3,000 based on the number of rooms and other services provided. [29]

Under the Cambodia National Poverty Reduction Strategy, measures have been proposed to enhance the potential of tourism in reducing poverty. These include (i) an integrated approach to dealing with tourism and poverty, (ii) establishment of poverty reduction development zones in high poverty areas and where tourism has a significant potential to contribute to the growth of the local economy, (iii) public-private partnerships to support small and medium-sized tourism enterprises where the poor can benefit in terms of access to employment opportunities, (iv) sharing of best practices in tourism development with communities in order to gain knowledge through "learning by doing," and (v) promotion of domestic tourism that can benefit small businesses.

An example of CBT in rural areas in Cambodia is Chambok commune, Phnom Sruich district, Kompong Speu Province. The commune is located on the outskirts of the Kirirom National Park about 110 kilometers (km) west of Phnom Penh City. Chambok commune administers nine villages with a total population of 546 families. CBT in Chambok improves the livelihood of villagers in Chambok commune where they generated an income of about US$10,405 during 2003 and 2004. [30]

Some specialists [31] argue that tourism sustains a low cost of the fund for creating new work places, quickens the economic development through powerful multiplying effects, improves the aesthetic ambience of the constructions from the city and intensifies the facility of spending the leisure time for residents. At the same time it offers support in default of alternatives for developing a solid economic base: if the cities do not compete for the financial resources of the tourists, they are likely to lose in the increasing competitions which take place globally. [32]

Urban tourism, if correctly planned, developed and managed where CBT is involved, will bring advantages and benefits, both to urban communities and overall society. [33] Tourism encourages the development of new cultural and commercial facilities that can be utilized by the residents and the tourists. Tourism permits the collection of necessary

funds to preserve the natural, archaeological and historical monuments, art and cultural traditions and most of all, contributes to the improvement of environment quality. [34] Within an urban community, tourism can create new work places where CBT is involved; create new perspectives for local tourism firms and new investment possibilities; increase incomes and the implicit improvement of life standards for local collectivity; and generate income from local taxes which can be used for restoration of infrastructure and improvement of the community facilities where CBT is implemented. Tourism within urban communities leads to upgrading of the infrastructure whose direct beneficiaries, besides the tourists, are the urban residents of that area. [35]. [36] Hence, the beneficiaries of urban tourism, are the urban community and as such the community in the urban areas should participate in CBT. [37]

Success Stories of CBT in Urban Areas

Due to the numerous literatures on CBT in rural areas, this segment would only discuss the examples of CBT in urban areas. An example of CBT can be seen in Cape Town where urban local community participates and perform at the cultural centre. Engagement of local actors, dancers, painters and craft sellers at the centre is considered a measure to address the issue of urban unemployment. Many tour groups are handed to local walking tour guides for tourist shopping and tours of the cultural centres. The visitors are shown daily activities of the locals by these local tour guides. [38]

A large part of the interviewees (tourists from Germany, Great Britain, Scandinavia and US) emphasised that tourists were mainly interested to know the local residents and to interact with the locals. Since visitors are interested to know about the development process in the city, CBT is applied where the local urban community shows the South African daily life and culture. With the application of CBT, many tourists were able to see the "far side" of Cape Town and search for a "complete" and "real" picture of the City of South Africa. CBT enables the operators to meet the demand for authenticity when CBT focus on the culture of townships. CBT enables the idea of township culture, which is strongly equated with an essentialist idea of African culture to be experienced by tourists. With the involvement of CBT, tourists are also taken to public institutions or community projects

51

(health centres, schools, crèches). In many tours, children play an important role where they often sing and dance for the tourists during school visit. [39]

An association, "Belleville Insolite" (beautiful unusual city) since 2000, recommends unusual visits of Paris, which applies the concept of urban CBT. Deviating from traditional urban tours, CBT is being promoted where the tours avoid every famous city attraction and involves the local urban community in the visits. By applying CBT, the tourists are able to see the city as local people see it. Differently themed journeys based on city settings are offered to the various types of tourists and the urban community is trained to be guides. The tours tend to bring the people from the local communities and the tourists closer together and by applying CBT, this is made possible. [40]

Challenges of Rural-Urban CBT

A. Illusion of CBT

It is argued that sometimes CBT seeks to ensure the industry's long-term survival rather than social justice. Unlike community development commitment to social justice and empowerment, Blackstock submits that CBT proponents focus on sustaining the tourism industry. Proponents seek to make tourism more acceptable to the local residents and do not challenge or question the development of a tourism industry. This attitude illustrated in Port Douglas, Australia as the local tourism association chairperson argued that anti-tourism sentiment was due to the lack of understanding of the benefits of tourism in the town. It is argued that the language used by CBT advocates suggests a focus on economic profitability not local empowerment. [41] The CBT paradigm is also said to be functional, as it seeks to identify potential problems and overcome these in order to ensure that the tourism industry is not damaged by adverse local reactions. The community is co-opted into supporting tourism through an illusion of power sharing but they are not empowered to reject tourism as a development option. Therefore, it is argued that CBT lacks the transformative intent of community development, which starts with the recognition that current economic, political and social structures must change. (Stettner, 1993) [42].

B. Residents' Discomfort

Pinel's dramatic description of residents' discomfort and resentment towards tourism and tourists can be reflective of many other similar destinations: "Some tourists see the village like an incidental 'backdrop for their experience,' and not as a living community with real people". [43] This type of encounter can cause negative effects to the locals', respect, pride, self-confidence and hospitable attitude, potentially resulting in locals' avoidance from communicating with tourists, leading to potential conflicts, social tension, cultural clash and stereotyping in both host and guest. One of the ways such negative consequences can be avoided is through assurance of the main premise of CBT and input from all stakeholders, while outlining an adaptive, proactive and all-inclusive plan. [44]

C. Unequal Distribution of Income

In Malaysia, more educated and capable operators are dominant in profiting from the homestay programme and as such the aim of the homestay programme i.e. to eradicate poverty amongst rural community is affected. Such practices exist since there is absence of mechanism to monitor the spread of benefits to the entire homestay operators in the village. From some interviews with villagers in August 2009, it was found that many villagers in Peruas, Raub, Pahang, had not been informed about the rural action plan being prepared and they argued that only a fraction of the villagers knew about it. [45] Similarly, in Cambodia, in 2004, a study indicated that the total income CBT in ecotourism of the Chambok village was KR156,499,100 (US$39,124), or an average household income of KR1,232,276 (US$308). The highest income group absorbed just over half (53%) of the total income, while the lowest income group absorbed 5%. [46]

CONCLUSION

Tasci et al. (2013) [47] highlight that when CBT principles are overlooked, the results may be more dramatic than the typical costs of tourism since the groups involved in CBT projects are usually the marginalised, poor, and disadvantaged groups. Hence, the adoption of a hybrid rural and urban CBT brings about a closer notion of social justice. However, it should be noted that disappointed expectations and disillusioned communities from

the collapsed, failed, struggling or poor performance of a CBT project can endanger the well-being of the rural and urban locals, which may already be under the threat of disappearing due to unfavourable socio-economic conditions. Therefore, before jumping on the bandwagon of CBT in the rural and urban settings, authorities need to ensure the critical requirements for successful CBT applications.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

REFERENCES

[1]   B.P. George, A. Nedelea and M. Antony, M. "The business of community based tourism: A multi-stakeholder's approach", *Journal of Tourism Research*, http://jotr.eu/index.php/tourism-manage ment/80-the-business-of-community-based-touris m-a-multi-stakeholder-approach.

[2]   J. Ife, 1996. *Community Development: Creating Community Alternatives – Vision, Analysis and Practice*. Melbourne, Australia, Addison Wesley Longman.

[3]   A. Gilchrist, 2003. "Community development in the UK – possibilities and paradoxes", *Community Development Journal, 38*(1), 16-25.

[4]   S. Wearing and M. McDonald, 2002. "The development of community-based tourism: Re-thinking the relationship between tour operators and development agents as intermediaries in rural and isolated area communities", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 10*(3), 191-206.

[5]   P.A. Johnson, 2010. "Realizing rural community based tourism development: Prospects for social-economy enterprises", *Journal of Rural and Community Development, 5*(1/2), 150-162.

[6]   M.B. Orams, 1995. "Toward a more desirable form of ecotourism", *Tourism Management, 16*(1), 3-8.

[7]   A. Gibson, R. Dodd, M. Joppe and B. Jamieson, 2003. "Ecotourism in the city? Toronto's green tourism association", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 15*(6), 324-327.

[8]   J. Hingham & M. Luck, 2002. "Urban ecotourism: a contradiction in terms", *Journal of Ecotourism, 1*(1), 36-51.

[9]   B. Kastelein, 2004. "Urban ecotourism: impossible conundrum", *Business Mexico, 10*, 36-42.

[10] N.C. Abdullah and J. Said, 2014. Economic empowerment of rural communities in homestay programmes: Loopholes of governance structure. Paper presented at the 6th International Conference of Financial Criminology 2014, Bangkok, 5-7 June.

[11] Ministry of Planning, Cambodia. 2008. General population census of Cambodia 2008. Phnom Penh, Ministry of Planning.

[12] The Star, 2013. "Big drop in poverty rate", The Star, http://www.thestar.com. my/News/Nation/2013/03/28/Big-drop-in-poverty-rate/, 28 March.

[13] J. Sulaiman, A. Azman, and Z. Khan, 2014. "Re-modeling urban poverty: A multidimensional approach", *International Journal of Social Work and Human Services*, *2*(2), 64-72.

[14] B. Stiftung, BTI 2014. Cambodia Country Report. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, *16*.

[15] Asian Development Bank. 2014. Cambodia country poverty analysis. Manila: Asian Development Bank, *7*.

[16] Note 15.

[17] Phnom Penh Capital and UNICEF, 2012. The Phnom Penh Urban Poor Assessment: A Baseline Survey on the Social and Economic Situations And Capacity of Existing Services in Urban Poor Communities, Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh Capital & UNICEF, *5*.

[18] D.K. Sen, 2005. "Economics of poverty and social justice: A brief analysis", *Pakistan Economic and Social Review*, *43*(2), 213-226.

[19] United Nations Economic and Social Comm-ission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2013. Social Justice and Participation, Policy Brief Technical Paper 12, 1.

[20] Note 19, p. 4.

[21] J.T. Jost and A.C. Kay, 2014. "The History of Psychology and Social Justice", in C.V. Johnson and H.L. Friedman, The Praeger Handbook of Social Justice and Psychology, California, ABC-CLIO, 3-32.

[22] Note 21.

[23] R. Liepins, R, 2000. "New energies for an old idea: reworking approaches to 'community' in contemporary rural studies", *Journal of Rural Studies*, *16*(1), 23–35.

[24] V. Amit and N. Rapport. 2002. The trouble with community: Anthropological reflections on movement, identity and collectivity, London, Pluto, *13*.

[25] N.B. Salazar, 2011. "Community-based cultural tourism: issues, threats and opportunities", *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 1-14.

[26] R. Williams. 1976. *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*. New York, Oxford University Press, *76*.

[27] Note 25.

[28] Global Traveller. 2014. Malaysia homestay offers lifestyle experience. http://www.globaltravellertv.com/consumer/malaysian-homestay-offers-lifestyl e-experience.

[29] Y. Ibrahim and A.R.A. Razzaq, 2010. "Homestay program and rural community development in Malaysia", *Journal of Ritsumeikan Social Sciences and Humanities*, *2*, 7-24.

[30] M. Prachvuth, 2006. "Tourism, Poverty, and Income Distribution: Chambok Community-based Ecotourism Development, Kirirom National Park, Kompong Speu Province, Cambodia", *Journal of GMS Development Studies*, *3*, 25-40.

[31] R. Mustaffa, 2009.Transformation of image and spirit for Kampung Bare, http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?p=31725306.

[32] C. Sotharith. 2006. Urban Poverty and Safety Net in Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, 4-5.

[33] C. Iordache and I. Cebuc, 2009. "The influence of juridical regulations upon tourist town planning", *Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management*, *1*(10), 86-92.

[34] G.C Stanciulescu, 2009. "The role of urban marketing in the local economic development", *Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management*, *1*(10), 114-135.

[35] Note 34.

[36] World Tourism Organization. 1994. *National and Regional Tourism Planning Methodology and Cases*. London: Routledge.

[37] F. Vela and A. Neledea, 2008. "Strategic management of urban tourism in Albania – the potential role of urban tourism in competitive development of Albania destination", *Journal of Tourism*, *6*, 40-43.

[38] R.A. Harvey, 2011.Tourism is everyone's business: the participants and places of township tourism in Cape Town, South Africa. Ph.D thesis, University of Florida, 177.

[39] M. Rofles, M. Steinbrink and C. Uhl, 2009.Townships as Attraction: An Empirical Study of Township Tourism in Cape Town. Cape Town, Universitätsverlag Potsdam, *29*.

[40] A. Butty, J. Berclaz, M. Pfefferlé and J. Maret, 2014.*Urban ecotourism: How urban tourism could be sustainable and environmentally friendly?*, Valais-Wallis.

[41] K. Blackstock, 2005. "A critical look at community based tourism", *Community Development Journal*, *40*(1), 39-49.

[42] A.C. Stettner, (1993). "Community or commodity? Sustainable development in mountain resorts", *Tourism Recreation Research*, *18*(1), 3-10.

[43] D.D. Pinel, 2013. Create a good fit: A community-based Tourism Planning Model. http://nsgl.gso.uri.edu/washu/washuw99003/28-Pinel.pdf.

[44] A.D.A Tasci, K.J. Semrad and S.S. Yilmaz. 2013. Community based tourism: Finding the equilibrium in COMCEC context - Setting the Pathway for the Future. Ankara, COMCEC Coordination Office, *18*.

[45] Note 10.

[46] Note 44, pp. 17-18.

[47] Note 44.