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**PLACE ATTACHMENT AND RURAL YOUTH'S
PERCEPTIONS ON RICE FIELD ACTIVITIES: THE CASE
OF THREE HOMESTAYS IN KEDAH**

Puteri Yuliana Samsudin^{1*}, Nor Zarifah Maliki², Suraiyati Rahman³
^{1,2,3} School of Housing, Building and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia
Email of corresponding author *: puteriyuli@gmail.com

Abstract - Homestay programme is one of the main subjects in maintaining the cultural activities in tourism. Homestay programme is a form of community-based tourism that offers tourists and local communities to experience the local lifestyle and heritage culture. However, rapid urbanization has resulted in replacing the traditional components with modern components. This has caused facing reduction of definition and attachment in traditional places such as rice field. Realizing that youth plays an essential part in homestay programme, this paper tends to explore rural youth's perception of rice field activities in homestay programme. The perceptions include youth's knowledge, experience, and values on rice field activities. This paper highlights the concept of place attachment and provides an understanding the idea of homestay programme and focuses on homestay programme which has the rice field settings and offers rice field activities. The study has chosen three homestays in Kedah as a case study. The homestay programmes are Homestay Kg. D' Belimbing, Homestay Kg. Jeruju and Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai, Kedah. It is hoped that this will further provide suggestions for future research.

Keyword - place attachment, homestay programme

1 INTRODUCTION

For decades, studies regarding the people's perceptions and attitudes towards places are essential to understanding the nature of their relationships to a site. Place attachment is the central concept of environmental psychology that is associated with the person-place bonding. Place attachment is regarded as an emotional bond between people and place (Altman & Low, 1992). Past studies (e.g., Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon, 2003; Gross & Brown, 2006) have shown inconsistent findings regarding the place attachment and activity involves relationship. The results have pointed to a positive or non-significant relationship. This study sets out to explore youth's perceptions on rice field activities that focus on homestay programme.

Altman and Low (1992) described place attachment as an affective link between individuals and their environments. The research discussed that place attachment consists of interactions between affective and emotions, knowledge and beliefs and behaviours and actions regarding a setting. Shumaker and Taylor (1983) argued that place attachment is a person-place connection that grows from characteristics of people and specifiable conditions of the environment. From the previous studies, the affective, emotion, and feeling are the most commonly reported main ideas of place attachment. It can be demonstrated in the questions constructed by researchers who were studying place attachment. Cognitive and behavioural aspects are the other features of place attachment. Tuan (1977) hints to this relationship when he discusses attachment as the accumulation of memories and experience in place, and Manzo (2005) argued that our experiences and memories create place meaning. She explained that "it is not simply the places themselves that are significant, but rather what can be called 'experience-in-place' that creates meaning." Besides, place attachment identified as a state of psychological well-being is resulted from accessibility to a place or a state of distress upon separation from a place (Giuliani and Feldman, 1993). In addition, long-term interactions with place and memories that occur through the place could create attachment.

Farnum et al. (2005) asserted that people-place interactions are often formed through psychological procedures rather than physical contacts. It indicates that people do not have to have physical interactions with places in making strong emotional bonds with these places. They might also integrate strong affections with mental representative places that they have never been there. In this case, they may associate strong feelings towards some environmental components and convey the same feelings to the other places with similar elements. However, this may not assure that outlook of places can always shape the emotional attachments to these places and it highly depends on the existing bonds formed through previous environmental experiences. Nevertheless, place attachment plays a positive role in people's lives and in their care of the place. Shamai (1991) realized that people who feel an emotional attachment to a place may be more active to preserve that place. Scannell and Gifford (2010, page number?) define place attachment as: "a bond between an individual or group and a place that can vary in terms of spatial level, degree of specificity, and social or physical features of the place, and is manifested through affective, cognitive, and behavioural psychological processes". This paper used the Tripartite Model by Scannell and Gifford (2010) to explore rural youth's place attachment in Homestay Programmes sites and activities. This model defines three variables of place attachment. The three dimensions includes person (social norms, personal experience), psychological process (affect, cognition, behavior), and place (social properties, physical properties) dimensions. The relationship between person and place was also considered on cognitive elements. The memories, beliefs, meaning, and knowledge that individuals associated with their central settings make them personally important. Place attachment as cognition involves the bonding to place meaning as well as the cognitions that facilitate closeness to a place. Through memory, people have created place meaning and connect it to themselves. As noted earlier, one can grow attached to the settings where memorable eras or important events occurred (Hay, 1998; Hunter, 1974; Manzo, 2005; Rubenstein & Parmelee, 1992; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996).

The Community-based tourism (CBT) concept was used a long time ago to boost the rural development, both in developed countries such as Ireland (Storey, 2004) and developing countries such as Brazil (Honey, 2008). The CBT is a tourism that is closely related to nature, culture and local custom. It is designed to attract the tourist market that needs authentic experiences, enhancing community development, poverty alleviation and conservation. The demands for community-based tourism is based on the access to the rural area, better private mobility, more leisure time, fresh air and active pastimes (Ibrahim, 2004). In 1988, Homestay Programme was introduced by The Ministry of Arts, Culture, and Tourism (MOCAT). The main objective of Homestay Programme is to offer accommodation to the tourists and discover the local, cultural and natural lifestyle (Kayat, 2009; Jabil et. al, 2011). Through this programme, tourists will have the opportunity to get experience with friendly host families. Tourists will enjoy the many experiences in villages such as practice how to cook traditional cuisine, learn the Malay customs and various traditional games and activities of the Malay community (Ministry of Tourism Malaysia, 2011). Homestay Programme is situated in rural areas, where tourists will accommodate, be entertained by the cultural performances and traditional activities and have meals with their adoptive families (Aminudin and Jamal, 2006). According to Liu (2006), Homestay Programme is facing problems to attract local community to participate in the programme. There is a lack of responsibility among the local community because they do not have knowledge about the tourism activities. The key success factor in Homestay Programme is leadership and commitment (Amran & Zainab, 2009; Yahaya & Abdul Rasid, 2010). The Homestay Programme activity is one of the community based tourism that offers tourists to explore the cultural and natural landscape during their vacation.

2 METHODOLOGY

Focus group discussion using pictures was aimed to explore the perception of rural youth's on homestay activities which was based according to the Scannell and Gifford Theory of place attachment. This part covered the dimension of process which is cognitive elements. The cognitive elements include knowledge and experience of rural youth's on homestay activities. In this focus

group discussion, the participants were asked to explain their perceptions on activities shown in the pictures. There are twelve pictures selected before the researcher conducted the discussions. The pictures were selected according to the rice field activities in homestay programme throughout Malaysia. The pictures were label as no. 7 to no. 18. Content analysis was mainly conducted based on focus group data, as the rural youths explained about their knowledge and experience on rice field activities. Microsoft Word 2007 and Microsoft Excel 2007 were used to store, manage, and analyse (content analysis) the qualitative data from the focus group discussions. First, the data from the focus group discussions were transcribed, and the text was divided into categories. Then, codes were derived from the text, and these were grouped into sub-themes and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The sub-themes and themes consist of youths perceptions on their knowledge and experiences with rice field activities. Finally, patterns among sub-themes and themes for youth's perceptions were identified.

3 RESULTS

This section summarizes the findings on rural youth's perceptions on rice field activities in homestay programme. The perception of youths was categorized into two themes which is knowledge and experience. The themes were categorized into subthemes according to youth's perceptions. The responses of youth's perception were summarized in Table 1.1.



Figure 1.1 List of selected photos

Table 1.1 List of themes, sub-themes and responses

Picture	Themes	Sub-themes	Responses
Picture 7	-Knowledge -Experience	-Competition -Make kites -enjoy -demonstrate the activities	-we organized kites competition to build a good relationship between village community..." - "I know how to makes kites." - "kites were made by adults and old villagers that have experience and knowledge on making kite...." - When, tourists come to my village I always demonstrate for them how to make kites and how to play kites. - "I love to teach outsiders about my

			<p><i>culture and traditional activities...”</i></p> <p><i>- “I enjoy playing kites with my friends during my free time.”</i></p> <p><i>-I do not know how to make kites and playing kites but I have seen children and youth playing kites when tourists came to my village.....“</i></p>
Picture 8		<p>-cycling along paddy field</p> <p>-memories with family</p>	<p><i>-” I always cycling along the paddy field with my friends when i was in primary school. “</i></p> <p><i>-” I also experience cycling along the paddy field,”.</i></p>
Picture 9		<p>-peaceful</p> <p>-calmness</p>	<p><i>- “ Yes, of course I have done this before. I love walking around my village. It is so peaceful and give me calmness.</i></p> <p><i>- “Yes, I love the scenery of paddy field in the morning before the sunrise.”</i></p> <p><i>- “ I always walk along the paddy field with my father in the morning. I enjoy the beautiful scenery of green paddy field”</i></p>
Picture 10		<p>-make orang-orang</p>	<p><i>“ This is orang-orang. I know how to make orang-orang. My father teach me how to make orang-orang. Normally...orang-orang can be made from bamboo”</i></p> <p><i>- “Orang-orang can makes birds afraid.”</i></p>
Picture 11		<p>-rice field activities</p> <p>-plantng paddy</p> <p>-relax near rice field</p> <p>-no idea</p> <p>-do not know</p> <p>-play with friends</p>	<p><i>- “I have experienced planting paddy with my father. My father own a paddy field near this village.”</i></p> <p><i>- “I do not have chance to plant paddy but I always see paddy farmers planting paddy in my village..”</i></p> <p><i>- “I do not know how to plant paddy.”</i></p> <p><i>-I have no idea about planting paddy”</i></p> <p><i>- “I don’t know how to plant paddy but I have seen adults planting paddy..”</i></p>
Picture 12		<p>-know the activity</p>	<p><i>- “ I know this activity. My parents own a paddy field. So, I have the opportunity to help my father to fertilized the paddy”</i></p> <p><i>- “I have seen catching ducks activity when tourist come to my village.”</i></p> <p><i>- “I have experienced demonstrate the activity to the tourists”</i></p> <p><i>- “I do not know this activity. I hope I can try this activity in the future</i></p>
Picture 13		<p>-help homestay operator</p> <p>-excited</p>	<p><i>- “I have seen this activity before when tourist come to my village, this activity only done when there is a special events or for tourists to know the tradiitonal activities.</i></p> <p><i>- “I have experienced to prepare the activity for tourist last year. “</i></p> <p><i>- “My friends and I were helping the homestay operators to set up the place for catching ducks activity in paddy field.”</i></p> <p><i>- “It is such a wonderful experience! The tourist were enjoying themselves so much!”</i></p>
Picture 14		<p>-enjoy</p> <p>-memories with friends</p> <p>-love environment</p>	<p><i>- “I enjoy the scenery of green paddy field.”</i></p> <p><i>- “I remember when I was a little boy, I always playing with my friends beside the paddy field.”</i></p>

			- “ <i>I enjoy the moment and love the environment so much!</i> ”
Picture 15		-competition -annual event	- “ <i>There was perch(ikan puyu) fishing competition in my village. ‘Youths in this village were involved in the competition’</i> - “ <i>Every year, youth in this village create an annual event.</i> ”
Picture 16		-raining and harvesting season	- “ <i>Only in raining season or harvesting season there are a lot of fish.</i> - “ <i>For homestay activities, the organizer have to create a suitable place for tourist to experience the activities because it is not easy to catch fish in the paddy field.</i> “
Picture 17		-relax -do not know the activity	“ <i>Every evening, youth are riding motorcycle in the village to relax and view the beautiful scenery of the village and paddy field</i> ”
Picture 18		-beautiful scenery -calm -relaxing -play with friends	- “ <i>I have done this activity since primary school until now. I love the beautiful scenery of paddy field. I like the environment so much</i> ”. - “ <i>I love relaxing near the paddy field because it gives me calmness.</i> ” - “ <i>Children always sit near the paddy field and always play with their friends.</i> ”

After the discussion with 13 youths in three homestays, the researcher found that youths who have knowledge and experience on rice paddy landscape activities usually do have a family background as paddy farmers and homestay operators. Besides, most of the respondents that answered and discussed on rice paddy landscape activity are males. Only four female respondents answered and explained the details of the events. The respondents seem so excited to tell the researcher about the activities, but some of them have no idea when the researcher shows the pictures. The activities that the youths were interested to know are catching ducks, playing kites, making orang-orang, catching fish using bubu and catching fish using a hand(gogoh). When the researcher asked about the activities, only a few of them can explain the activities. From their answer, the result revealed that youth with high knowledge, experience, and values on paddy field activities received support by their family. Moreover, their family owns the paddy field, and they always help their father to do the paddy field activities. Furthermore, a few of them get the knowledge from their observation in the paddy field. They are interested to know the activities, but they do not have the opportunity to try the activities.

5 CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study of place attachment identifies the relationship between people and place. Moreover, the place attachment concept is essential in order to know how people perceived their environment and traditional activities in their daily lives. This study would help to ensure the sustainability of culture in tourism activities, and rural youths can learn the traditional activities in their daily lives. Although the study has brought attention to the connection between landscapes and human perceptions, it should be noted that further research with different methods and larger samples are recommended to explore strengthening findings. Moreover, more topics on place attachments and activity involvements should also be covered. Therefore, future study is needed to explore the affective and behavioural elements in place attachment models to know the perception of youth as well as sustaining the rice field activities in homestay programme. In addition, future research is also needed to explore other settings of homestays including orchard plantation and fishing villages.

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