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SUSTAINABLE ECO-TOURISM STRATEGY FOR LOCAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KAMPUNG ORANG ASLI SUNGAI BUMBUN

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ABSTRACT

The preservation of indigenous cultures and habitats through sustainable eco-tourism projects has become a significant issue in modern tourist discourse. This abstract investigates the development and execution of a sustainable eco-tourism strategy designed specifically for Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun, a community situated in the lush Malaysian rainforest. The research subject addressed herein is the dilemma of reconciling economic development through tourism with the preservation of the Orang Asli's cultural legacy and the vulnerable ecosystems that surround them. This study's main research question is: How can a sustainable ecotourism plan be developed and put into practice to promote local tourism development while preserving Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun's cultural and natural integrity? To answer this topic, a mixed-methods approach that included qualitative interviews and participant observation was used. This process allowed for a thorough grasp of the community's needs, goals, and environmental concerns. The findings suggest that a sustainable eco-tourism plan for Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun should prioritize community involvement, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation. This study, which emphasizes the importance of community engagement, cultural sensitivity, and environmental stewardship, provides valuable insights for policymakers, tourism practitioners, and local communities working to achieve sustainable tourism development while preserving indigenous heritage and ecological integrity.

ARTICLE INFO

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Implementing a Sustainable Eco-Tourism Strategy for Local Tourism Development in Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun is crucial to balance economic growth, environmental protection, and cultural heritage conservation (Curtin & Bird, 2021). This strategy can promote equitable growth, empower local communities, and protect valuable ecosystems (Curtin & Bird, 2021). Without a well-defined strategy, unsustainable tourism practices may lead to environmental degradation, loss of cultural identity, and socioeconomic imbalances (Wu & Liang, 2023).

Eco-tourism is seen as a responsible form of travel that connects with rising environmental consciousness and ethical consumerism (Othman, 2024). For the residents of Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun, eco-tourism offers economic prospects and a means to preserve their way of life and natural heritage (Othman, 2024). However, there is a need for education and awareness-raising efforts to enhance understanding and enthusiasm for eco-tourism concepts (Curtin & Bird, 2021).

A Sustainable Eco-Tourism Strategy provides a framework for comprehensive development by combining environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and community engagement (Curtin & Bird, 2021). It encourages local stakeholders to actively participate in decision-making, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for their environment and heritage (Curtin & Bird, 2021). This strategy acts as a catalyst for economic growth, cultural interchange, social empowerment, and natural resource sustainability (Curtin & Bird, 2021).

To ensure the success of a Sustainable Eco-Tourism Strategy in Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun, elements such as community involvement, government support, infrastructure development, marketing strategies, and adherence to environmental regulations must be considered (Curtin & Bird, 2021). Collaboration among stakeholders is essential for overcoming challenges and achieving long-term success (Curtin & Bird, 2021).

While previous research has provided insights into best practices and challenges related to eco-tourism strategies in similar contexts, further context-specific studies are needed to understand the unique socio-cultural and environmental dynamics of Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun (Curtin & Bird, 2021). The goal is to develop a tailored strategy that meets the specific needs and aspirations of the community, providing practical recommendations for sustainable tourism development (Curtin & Bird, 2021).

In conclusion, a Sustainable Eco-Tourism Strategy for Local Tourism Development in Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun is essential for promoting sustainable growth, preserving cultural heritage, and protecting the environment. By incorporating insights from community stakeholders, empirical data analysis, and best practices from other eco-tourism destinations, this strategy can serve as a model for eco-tourism development in indigenous communities worldwide.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of research on the Sustainable Eco-Tourism Strategy for Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun has changed dramatically over time, mirroring larger trends in environmental and cultural conservation initiatives. Initially, research concentrated on traditional tourism models, with little attention on sustainability or community involvement. However, in recent decades, there has been a paradigm shift towards eco-tourism, driven by worries about environmental degradation and cultural commodification. Milestones in this sector

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include significant publications by scholars such as Ceballos-Lascuráin, who originated the term "eco-tourism" in the late twentieth century, and Honey, who argued for the incorporation of conservation and community development into eco-tourism programmes. More recent contributions have emphasised the significance of taking a comprehensive approach to eco-tourism planning, including themes such as sustainable development, community empowerment, and cultural preservation. Theoretical frameworks such as the Triple Bottom Line and the Destination Sustainability Index have provided useful insights into the complex interplay of environmental, social, and economic aspects in eco-tourism settings. Researchers have increasingly used methods including qualitative interviews to capture the varied nature of eco-tourism phenomena.

Several scholars have defined and reinterpreted the notions of sustainability, eco-tourism, and community participation within the context of the Sustainable Eco-Tourism Strategy for Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun. Definitions have shifted from restricted interpretations centred exclusively on environmental protection to more broad frameworks that include social and economic aspects. Recent conceptualizations of these variables underline the interdependence of environmental, social, and economic systems, emphasising the importance of integrated approaches to sustainability. Theories and models for explaining these concepts have also evolved, with a greater emphasis on systems thinking and complexity theory. Recent advances in research methods include the use of participatory approaches, such as co-design and action research, to involve local populations in the research process and assure the findings' relevance and applicability. These trends highlight the rising acknowledgment of the value of context-specific approaches to eco-tourism research and practice, as well as the necessity for interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Previous research on the Sustainable Eco-Tourism Strategy for Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun provided useful insights into the problems and opportunities related with eco-tourism development in indigenous communities. The main conclusions emphasise the importance of community participation, the necessity for integrated conservation policies, and the potential for eco-tourism to produce socioeconomic benefits for local communities. However, several studies have been hampered by methodological limitations, such as small sample sizes or a lack of longitudinal data. Each study makes a unique contribution by contextualising eco-tourism within the distinctive socio-cultural and environmental dynamics of Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun. Despite these contributions, there is still a research deficit on the long-term sustainability and resilience of eco-tourism programmes in the face of changing socioeconomic and environmental pressures. To close these information gaps and support more effective policy and practice, future research should prioritise longitudinal studies, comparative assessments across diverse eco-tourism destinations, and interdisciplinary collaborations.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study on the Sustainable Eco-Tourism Strategy for Local Tourism Development in Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun used a qualitative research approach. Face-to-face interviews with those involved in local tourist development. Two participants were chosen based on their experience and involvement in eco-tourism activities in the Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun community. The interviews were performed in person to encourage open discussion and build rapport with the participants. Each interview session lasted around 2 hours and was held in a convenient location for the participants, creating a comfortable and favorable environment for conversation. The interviews were semi-structured, which allowed us flexibility in investigating pertinent themes while remaining focused on the research objectives.

Following the interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed exactly to accurately reflect what the participants said. Additionally, field notes from the interviews were used to provide contextual insights and observations. Thematic coding was used in the data analysis process, with transcripts being evaluated and

tagged systematically based on reoccurring themes and categories important to the study's aims. Several major topics and categories were identified throughout the coding process in Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun, including sustainable eco-tourism strategy and local tourism development. These included community engagement, environmental conservation efforts, economic advantages, cultural preservation, infrastructural development, and government policy.

Each theme and category were further investigated to determine their interrelationships and consequences for eco-tourism planning and implementation in the community. Using qualitative interviews and thematic coding, this study wanted to gain a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with eco-tourism development in Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun, ultimately informing the development of sustainable eco-tourism strategies tailored to the local environment.

Table 1: Summary of the participants

Code	Designation	Job description / Principal activities
MR. A	Chairman of kampung orang asli Sungai Bumbun	Responsible for overseeing the Village Development and Safety Committee for the Orang Asli Village (JPKKOA).
MR. S	Handicraft master	Serves as a guardian of indigenous heritage, passing down traditional crafting techniques to future generations while fostering economic opportunities for the local community.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the initial stages of tourism development, it was primarily known as tourism, followed by sustainable tourism, and most recently ecotourism. Sustainable tourism refers to being 'ecologically sound and respectful of the needs of all involved' (Nash, 1996: 121). Ecotourism, on the other hand, refers to travel and visits to natural areas to experience and enjoy the natural environment while simultaneously promoting conservation activities, practicing balanced management, encouraging environmental education activities, and fostering the involvement of local communities in socio-economic activities (Ceballos, Lascurain, 1993; Buckley, 1994). Meanwhile, the definition of ecotourism by the International Ecotourism Society describes it as 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education' (TIES, 2015). Beginning from 1981 until 1988, a new element emerged, where activities related to cultural and natural observation began to receive attention. In the fourth stage of development, emphasis was placed on efforts to enhance economic benefits for the community or the respective areas. The fifth stage showed progress towards prioritizing positive environmental and socio-cultural conditions. Countries such as Australia, Canada, Africa, and New Zealand (Hitcock, 1997; Stewart, 1992; Young, 1989; Tutty, 1993; Lee, 1992) are among those that began to focus on their indigenous populations to expand these eco-tourism activities. These tourism activities are commonly known as 'indigenous tourism' or

'ethnic tourism' to highlight eco-tourism activities.

Ecotourism in Malaysia also involves the Orang Asli communities on the Malay Peninsula. The ecosystem environment and geographical location of Orang Asli settlements on the Malay Peninsula have indirectly developed ecotourism activities among the Orang Asli community. Badaruddin Mohamed (2002) has documented Malaysia's significant potential as an ecotourism destination. Indigenous tourism described by Hinch and Butler (1996) refers to tourism activities involving indigenous communities or native peoples inhabiting a certain area directly, whether controlling or showcasing their culture and way of life as the main attraction for tourists. Meanwhile, ethnic tourism refers to travel undertaken with the purpose of experiencing firsthand the culture and way of life of specific ethnic groups or communities considered unique. Ethnic tourism began to be discussed around the mid-1970s, with Smith (1977) and Graburn (1977) as pioneers. Through the book titled *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, Smith described ethnic tourism as an endeavor marketed to the public in terms of the quaint customs of indigenous and often exotic people. Graburn (1977:32) further discussed this issue, stating that ethnic tourism is a combination of culture and nature tourism.

This theme emphasizes the importance of sustainable tourism practices that respect the natural environment and cultural heritage of indigenous communities. This Section presents feedback obtained from the personal interview with 2 participants consisting of eco-tourism.

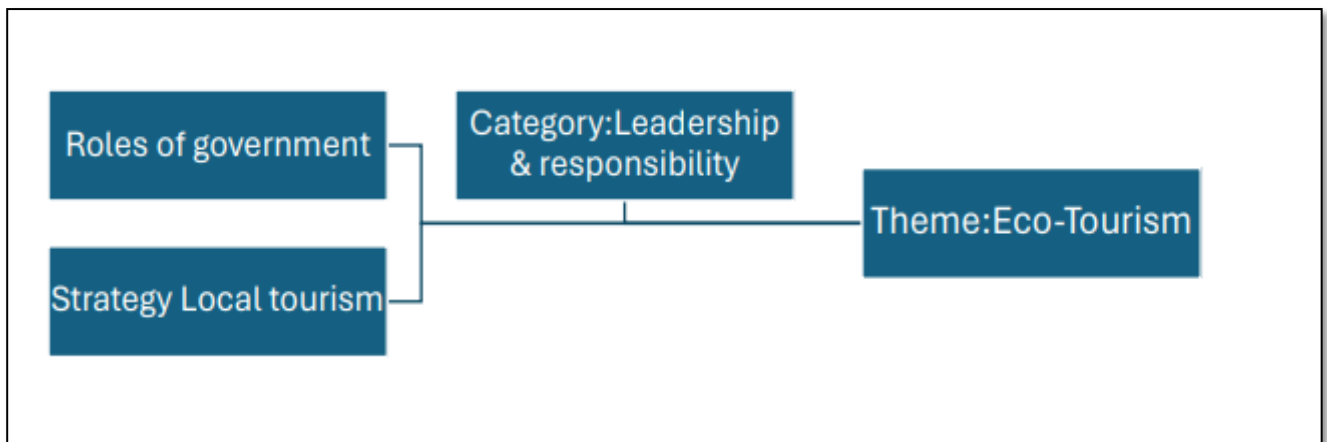


Figure 1: Framework

Table 2: Code analysis for eco-tourism

Theme	Code	Details
Eco-tourism	Role of government	-Financial support -Policy framework
	Strategy of local tourism	-Cultural Preservation -Economic empowerment

Mr. A and Mr. S answered the interview by emphasizing the roles of government and eco-tourism strategy in sustaining local tourism in Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun. Mr. A mentioned:

“Okay, currently, government agencies are always assisting our community. We have the Orang Asli Affairs Department, Ministry of Tourism under the handicraft agency, JKKM, the State Arts and Cultural Department, and many other agencies that help us.”

From narrative above it highlights the significant role of various government agencies in supporting the Orang Asli community's development. The government provides essential assistance to promote sustainable eco-tourism initiatives within the community, it highlights two main point which is:

Financial support: Government agencies allocate funds to support sustainable eco-tourism initiatives within the Orang Asli community in Kampung Sungai Bumbun. This financial assistance may be used for infrastructure development, such as building eco-friendly accommodations or establishing visitor centers, to enhance the tourism experience while minimizing environmental impact. Additionally, funding may be provided for capacity-building programs, training local guides, and artisans, thus empowering community members to actively participate in and benefit from eco-tourism activities.

POLICY FRAMEWORK:

Government agencies play a crucial role in establishing and enforcing policy frameworks that govern eco-tourism development in Kampung Sungai Bumbun. These policies may include regulations for land use planning, environmental conservation measures, and cultural heritage preservation. By providing clear guidelines and standards, government agencies ensure that eco-tourism activities are conducted in a sustainable and responsible manner, balancing the economic benefits of tourism with the need to protect the environment and uphold indigenous rights.

“I always bring and promote carvings, clothes, or handicrafts if there are exhibitions elsewhere. So, from there, the public can see the uniqueness of the products made by indigenous hands. Most of the items we make are not the same as those sold elsewhere.”

From narrative above, it highlights two main point which is:

1. **Cultural Preservation:** By promoting locally made products crafted by indigenous communities, the

strategy ensures the preservation and celebration of the Orang Asli cultural heritage in Kampung Sungai Bumbun. These products often reflect traditional craftsmanship, techniques, and designs passed down through generations, serving as tangible expressions of the community's identity and heritage. By showcasing and selling these products to tourists, the community not only generates income but also fosters pride and appreciation for their cultural traditions, contributing to the sustainability of their way of life.

2. Economic Empowerment: The strategy enhances local tourism development by creating economic opportunities for the Orang Asli community in Kampung Sungai Bumbun. By promoting and selling locally made products, artisans and craftsmen can earn a livelihood from their traditional skills and knowledge. This economic empowerment not only improves the standard of living within the community but also reduces dependency on external sources of income. Additionally, revenue generated from the sale of indigenous handicrafts can be reinvested into community development projects, further enhancing the overall socio-economic well-being of Kampung Sungai Bumbun.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, the sustainable eco-tourism strategy for Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun relies heavily on government support and effective eco-tourism strategies centered on cultural preservation and economic empowerment. Financial support from various government agencies enables infrastructure development and capacity-building programs, facilitating community participation and benefit from eco-tourism activities. Policy frameworks established by these agencies ensure that eco-tourism initiatives are conducted sustainably, balancing economic gains with environmental conservation and indigenous rights. Moreover, the promotion of locally made products not only preserves Orang Asli cultural heritage but also fosters economic empowerment within the community.

To ensure the sustainability and resilience of eco-tourism programs in Kampung Orang Asli Sungai Bumbun, it is essential to conduct longitudinal studies to monitor socio-economic and environmental impacts over time. Continuous training and skill development for local guides, artisans, and community members should be prioritized to enhance their engagement and benefits from eco-tourism activities. Diversifying eco-tourism offerings to include cultural experiences, traditional activities, and eco-friendly accommodations can attract a broader range of tourists. Greater involvement of the Orang Asli community in decision-making processes is crucial, ensuring their voices and interests are represented. Additionally, fostering partnerships between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector can leverage resources, expertise, and networks for more holistic and sustainable eco-tourism development.

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