

## **RESPONSIBLE TOURISM AND QUALITY OF LIFE: PERSPECTIVE OF LOCAL COMMUNITY**

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**Accepted date:** 10-12-2018

**Published date:** 11-03-2019

**To cite this document:** Rasdi, A. L. M., Som, A. P. M., Usolludin, H. H., & Nurhaiza Nordin. (2019). Responsible Tourism and Quality of Life: Perspective of Local Community. *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Environment Management*, 4(13), 49-56.

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**Abstract:** *This conceptual paper presents a review and discussing the concept and dimensions of sustainable tourism, responsible tourism and also the quality of life. Sustainable development is one strategy to resolve conflict on the impact of tourism activities. The main principle of sustainable development is to maintain the quality of the environment for future generations. Besides considering the needs of the visitor, the tourism industry, the environment, and the destination's host communities, sustainable tourism has to look also at current and future economic, social and environmental impacts. Responsible tourism is an element of sustainable tourism that shares similar objectives which aim at environmental protection, social welfare, and local economic benefits.*

**Keywords:** *Responsible Tourism; Sustainable Tourism; Quality of Life; Local Community*

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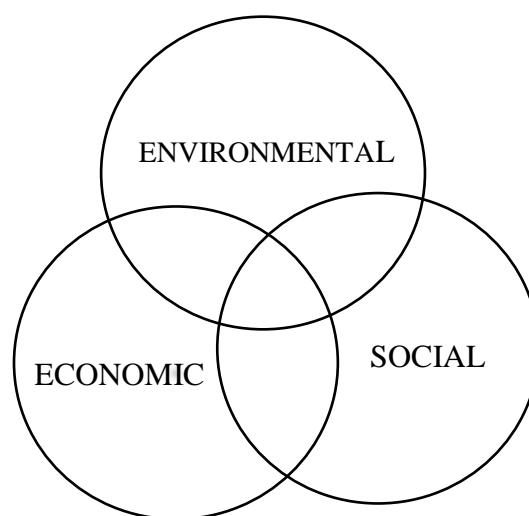
### **Introduction**

Over the past several decades, tourism has grown dramatically as a tool for regional economic development. Most of the community leaders and economic development specialists have progressively treated tourism as an important industry that can improve local employment opportunities, tax revenues, and economic diversity (Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013). In Malaysia, the tourism sector is an important contributor to the economy and is identified as one of the major sources of foreign exchange earnings and catalyst to the economic growth by contributing at least about 8 to 10 percent of the GDP (Mosbah & Abd Al Khuja, 2014). The tourism industry in Malaysia has become more important in the era of globalization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In fact, the tourism sector is the second largest contributor to the economy after the manufacturing sector (Amin, Mohd Salleh, Muda, & Ibrahim, 2013). According to Malaysia

Tourism statistics, in the year 2017, the numbers of tourist arrivals recorded were 25.95 million and contributed revenue of RM82.1 billion.

However, even though tourism has brought economic benefits, it also has significantly contributed to environmental degradation, negative social and cultural impacts and also habitat fragmentation. The global threat of climate change, diminishing natural resources and significant socio-economic inequalities is forcing companies and individuals to estimate the impact they are having on the natural, social and economic environments (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006). Thus, the tourism industry relies heavily on the sustained beauty and hospitality of the places and communities it operates in and has come under pressure to manage its negative and positive impacts (Frey & George, 2010). Decision makers also searched for alternative tourism planning, management and development options as they are increasingly aware of the drawbacks of mass tourism. Moreover, today's contemporary tourism management is more and more oriented towards sustainable development as the only possible paradigm because accomplishing the synergy of economic, social and environmental factors is a serious challenge for tourism academics and practitioners (Peric & Djurkin, 2014). New concepts such as sustainable tourism, tourism morality, ethics in tourism, visiting nature, green tourism, responsible tourism, people-oriented tourism, and parallel tourism have emerged in the tourism industry (Donyadide, 2010). In Malaysia, various tourism concepts such as ecotourism, shopping tourism, cultural and festival based tourism, ethnic-tourism, art, and heritage-based tourism, sports tourism and nature-tourism have also been introduced. All these tourism concepts have been integrated and proclaimed as the marketing strategy of tourism products at the international level (Che Leh & Hamzah, 2012)

Sustainable tourism development is related to several factors such as the economy, environmental, political and social that has a strong influential and independent effect on tourism development (Chan, 2010). Sustainable tourism has to look on for current and future economic, social and environmental impacts as well as considering the needs of visitors, the tourism industry, the environment and a destination's host communities (United Nations Environment Programme and World Tourism Organization (2005). Figure 1 had illustrated the three pillars of sustainability which are economic, environmental and social.



**Figure 1: Three Pillars of Sustainability**

However, the tourism industry faces several sustainability challenges, such as resources manipulation, economic uncertainty, and changes in tourism demand. Due to this, the tourism policymakers must promote and make available the benefits of renewal and resilience to the residents and the area (Hanafiah, Azman, Jamaluddin, & Aminuddin, 2016). Thus, responsible tourism practice (RTP) was introduced and become an established area of tourism research pertaining to enhance the current sustainable tourism development. As in the tourism industry, responsible business practice is essential because tourist destination development is heavily dependent on environmental and cultural resources. These resources need to be maintained and developed in a responsible way to achieve sustainable development for a tourist destination (Sheldon & Park, 2011). The concept of responsible tourism is very closely connected with sustainable development, that avoids conflicts between economic developments as well as social and also natural environment. Responsible tourism is an element of sustainable tourism that growing globally as advocates propose that can give benefits to tourism businesses and destinations (Farmaki, Constanti, Yiasemi, & Karis, 2014). Though sustainable and responsible tourism is based on similar pillars, which aiming at environmental protection, social welfare, and local economic benefits but, responsible tourism shifts responsibility towards individual, organizations and businesses.

Responsible tourism consists in undertaking such activities that enable achieving growth in a way that either does not destroy the existing environment and protect the culture, history, heritage, and achievements of local communities (Debicka & Oniszczyk-Jastrzabek, 2014). Besides, the attainment of responsible tourism requires careful management of tourists' and residents' behaviors to prevent deleterious effects on the environment, sociocultural setting and visitor satisfaction (Tay, Chan, Vogt, & Mohamed, 2016). A growing shift toward sustainable development has resulted in a renewed significance of the environmental, social, and economic impacts of tourism within communities (Tyrrell, Paris, & Biaett, 2013). Also, sustainability is increasingly added to destination competitiveness and also becoming an important concept of tourism destination (V. Mathew, 2009). Besides that, sustainable tourism development is also equally important in attracting people to visit the destination. The key element in successful tourism development is local community support as tourism planners. Thus, the tourism industry has to develop with the support of the residents because as one of the stakeholders in this industry, the local community plays a crucial role in tourism development. Other than that, authorities engaged in the tourism industry have to be concerned with the communities' views on development plans (Hanafiah et al., 2016). The quality of life among residents in any tourist destination is significantly influenced by the influx of tourism in the community. Community residents' perceptions of impact on tourism development which involve economic, social, cultural, political and environmental are played a significant role in residents' overall opinion about the living conditions of the community (Woo, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2016).

Responsible tourism has become an established area of tourism research and practice that typically understood as a broad set of tourist interactions with engagement and benefits for local communities that minimize negative social and environmental impacts (Caruana et al., 2014). However, majority of the studies regarding responsible tourism studies were conducted taking the perceptions of tourist or the service provider only (e.g., (Spenceley et al., 2002; (Tearfund, 2002); (Van der Merwe & Wöcke, 2007)), little attention has been paid to critically examine the relationship between responsible tourism and local people. Mathew & Sreejesh (2017) had suggested a study on tourism is mostly destination specific, further improvisation of scales can be considered. When responsible tourism emerges as a sustainable model for destination management, similar studies in various destinations may throw light into the

interventions of policymakers and tourism planners. Therefore, there is a need for the researcher to study regarding the responsible tourism towards local communities, especially in Malaysia context.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Sustainable Development***

According to Zhenhua Liu (2003), the concept of sustainability has its origins in the environmentalism and become important in the 1970s. The explicit idea of sustainable development was first highlighted in World Conservation Strategy by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN, 1980). Sustainability is broadly thought which implies good living conditions for next generations to come; while sustainable development is process-oriented and associated with managed changes that can bring about improvement in conditions for those involved in such development (Zhenhua Liu, 2003). Based on Owen, Witt, & Gammon (1993), the notion of sustainable development recognizes that the earth's resources are limited and subject to a number of unprecedented threats such as population growth, global warming, destruction of the ozone layer, and degradation of the environment, the loss of biological species and habitats and pollution in all its forms. Thus, a more careful management of the earth's resources is needed in order to make sure that they can be safeguarded and replenished.

Besides that Vodeb (2014) had mentioned that the concept of sustainable development is not only been used in the tourism industry but also everywhere in different sectors of human activity such as construction, entrepreneurship, forestry and so on. Sustainable development is the concept that complex and difficult to define. However, from the destination point of view, sustainable development can be defined as tourism activities that maintain and improve all forms of capital, recognizing the primary importance of natural capital. In addition, sustainable competitiveness of tourism destination is based on unique tourist experience and basically dependent on the quality of host-guest interaction and the goodwill of the local community.

### ***Sustainable Tourism Development***

In the literature, there are many approaches and techniques of defining the concept of sustainable tourism, whilst some of the researchers had made a transition from the concepts of sustainability or sustainable development. According to Zhenhua Liu (2003), sustainable tourism is conveniently defined as all types of tourism either conventional or alternative forms which contribute to or compatible with sustainable development. In addition, sustainable tourism is a system of tourism development that has to ensure sustainability or availability of the economy, natural resources, and socio-cultural life until the next generation. In essence, sustainable tourism should give long-term benefits for both current and future benefits to the local economy and social-culture without damaging the environment as well as to address the needs of visitors, the industry, and the community (UNWTO & UNEP, 2005).

Niedziółka (2012) had pointed out that, sustainable tourism is defined as all forms of activities, management, and development of tourism that preserve natural, economic and social integrity and guarantee maintenance of natural and cultural resources. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction by ensuring a meaningful experience to them, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them. In other words, sustainable tourism can be categorized into three aspects which are economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, and social-cultural sustainability.

### ***Responsible Tourism***

According to Farmaki et al., (2014), responsible tourism and sustainable tourism have similar goals but different focus. Sustainable tourism seeks to achieve particular numbers and types of visitors in order to minimize the effect of their activities on the destination, whilst responsible tourism extends beyond the management of natural resources and highlights the moral responsibility of tourism business towards host environment and societies. Besides, responsible tourism also addresses the sustainable tourism discourse in the application and is more of an expression to describe tourism that is sustainable because it acts sustainably. Hence, it can be inferred that when the local communities perceive that responsible tourism initiatives build on appropriate sustainability-based strategies and policies, then it will result in appropriate actions or behaviors, called as sustainable actions or behaviors. As claimed by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) (1996), *responsible tourism is tourism that promotes responsibility to the environment through its sustainable use; responsibility to involve local communities in the tourism industry; responsibility for safety and security of visitors and responsible government, employees, employers, unions and local communities.*

The idea of responsible tourism has its main domain understanding of associated individuals' participation in taking responsibility to take action, whereby different parties are involved, such as consumers, suppliers, tourism service providers, governments, local people, etc. Thus, Goodwin and Francis (2003) pointed out that, responsible tourism is about creating better places for people to live in and better places for people to visit by minimizing negative economic, environment and social impacts. Similarly, Weeden (2014) also defined responsible tourism as a concept that focused on minimization of interference in the natural environment, respect for cultural diversity, maximization of local people participation in providing tourist services, increasing customer satisfaction and satisfaction of tourists. In other words, responsible tourism principles develops a win-win situation between minimising negative impacts and provides benefits to host communities and give positive contributions to conservation of natural and cultural diversity.

Kilipiris & Zardava (2012) had stated that, by comparing the idea of responsible tourism with green or alternative is not the overthrow of the existing forms tourism, but the modification and improvement of current tourism industry practices in order to eliminate negative impacts. Responsible tourism and responsibility is not another form of tourism but a set of “responsible principles” that any form of tourism, including that of alternative, should be based on. Another characteristic cited by Kilipiris and Zardava (2012) is that responsible tourism feedback in welfare to the community. Planning at the local community level will be led by a culture which requires the cooperation of all stakeholders involved in the tourism decision making process. According to Mathew and Kumar (2014), responsible tourism envisions a triple bottom line approach which include economic responsibility, social responsibility, and environmental responsibility.

### ***Quality of Life***

From the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the improvement of the quality of life was appearing. At that time, from the view of people's personality development, it was recognized that economic and consumer race can often be harmful (Gondos, 2014). (Mohit, 2014) had mentioned that quality of life is more than happiness because it involves several factors such as enjoyment and achievement. Quality of life is can also be referring to the physical, psychological and sociological state of being of people. Andereck & Nyaupane (2011) had revealed that there are many ways in which tourism may impact an individual's QOL. A better QOL can be seen in the development of tourism products that can also be enjoyed by residents,

such as festivals, restaurants, natural and cultural attractions, and outdoor recreation opportunities. As an example, a higher personal standard of living through job creation and increased tax revenue which in turn result in services to residents. However, quality of life concept should not be confused with the income-based concept of standard of living.

As reported by Andereck & Nyaupane (2011), there are eight domains of tourism quality of life which include community well-being, urban issues, the way of life, community pride and awareness, natural and cultural preservation, economic strength, recreation amenities, and crime and substance abuse. However, (Liang & Hui, 2016) had developed and modifying the tourism quality of life scale to the contexts in China by adding new items which are family and personal well-being. Liang & Hui (2016) had come out with four tourism quality of life domains which are urban issues, community economic strength, family and personal well-being, the way of life and community awareness and facilities. Other than that, based on (Uysal, Sirgy, Woo, & Lina, 2016), quality of life also can be divided into two dimensions which are objective and subjective. The examples of the objective quality of life are economic well-being, leisure well-being, environmental well-being, and health well-being, whereas the examples of subjective well-being are happiness and life satisfaction. (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011) had reported in their study that based on Schalock (1996), to measure the quality of life, two types of indicators have been used which are the objective indicator and subjective indicator. Objective circumstances of people's live, such as income and education attainment while subjective evaluation of life circumstances, such as satisfaction with various aspects of life.

## **Conclusion**

In order to make sure the development of tourism activities can satisfy a need to travel, it is important to strive for the responsible and sustainable development of the tourism industry (Debicka & Oniszczyk-Jastrzabek, 2014). A study was done by Su, Huang, & Huang (2016), there are positive effects on residents' support for tourism and perceived quality of life, mediated by positive tourism impacts. A study was done by Nkemngu (2015) on the perceptions of residents of South Africa community on tourism impacts in their community and effect on the quality of life at the individual and community level, showed that most residents perceive tourism impacts to be largely positive in their community. Besides, tourism impacts also have strong revenue in improving quality of life for both individual respondents and the community as a whole. As a conclusion, this study will have significant contribution towards sustainable destination management because, while tourism destinations strive to maintain balance between sustainability and development, responsible tourism practices can enhance endeavours of sustainable tourism development (Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017). The findings of the investigation can assist tourism stakeholders community developers in the implementation of tourism development strategies based on local community attitudes on quality of life in tourism destinations (Aref, 2011).

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