

Tourism Development And Tourism Impacts In Kilim Geopark, Langkawi: How Local Community Perceive On Economic Impact

**Nurul Azwa Ahmad², Ahmad Shuib*¹, Sridar Ramachandran^{2,3} and
Syamsul Herman M. A.^{2,3}**

¹Institute of Agricultural and Food Policy Studies (IKDPM), Universiti Putra
Malaysia, Selangor, MALAYSIA

² Institute of Tropical Forestry and Forest Products (INTROP), Universiti Putra
Malaysia, Selangor, MALAYSIA

³Faculty of Forestry, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Selangor, MALAYSIA

This paper examines how tourism development of Langkawi into a popular tourist destination and the impacts to the local economy also generating local community income. In the second phase of the development project known as "Langkawi Tourism Blueprints". Langkawi is made into a nature ecotourism destination of international standard and to emphasizes the shift towards content development rather than infrastructure. This transformation, especially in the Kilim Karst Geopark, will bring about economic impacts where the government hopes will get local supports.

Key words: tourism development, Langkawi, local community, Langkawi Tourism Blueprints, Kilim Karst Geopark, economic impacts

Introduction

Tourism, as a significant form of human activity, can have major impacts. These impacts are very visible in the destination region, where tourists can interact with the local environment, economy, culture and society (Peter Mason, 2008). Tourism impacts can be positive or beneficial to the developing country but also can be negative or harmful. The most important impacts of the Langkawi Geopark are the economic opportunities it affords the people by creating new innovative industries that can give benefit to the local communities (Sharina,2011). The key to successful tourism growth are related to the characteristics of the host community in the destination region and the nature of the interaction between the visitors and residents (Wall, 1997 in Peter Mason, 2008). The tourism industry can grow rapidly however it unplanned and uncontrolled, the transformation will be affect the environment.

*Email: mad.shuib@gmail.com

Local community Perceptions Towards Tourism Impacts

Local communities have a key role in tourism management and leisure. Many researchers who did their studies in developing countries on local community perceptions towards impacts, especially on economic impacts had indicated favorable acceptance by the community. Understanding the community perceptions can help to access community support for continuing tourism development (Sharma, 2004 in Fariboz and Ma'rof, 2009). Residents usually welcome tourism in early stages of tourism development but gradually lose their hospitable attitudes towards tourists and tourism development; then they become more hostile and irritated with tourism (Mais, 2010).

Kilim Karst Geopark, Langkawi

Kilim Karst Geopark is the one of world class attractive places for nature sightseeing. Visitors can enjoy a variety of attractions, from the natural parks to large international events. Langkawi Kilim River Geopark is to be upgraded to one of the world's major attractions; with development projects carefully and systematically done it will boost Langkawi as a world class tourist destination. It is necessary that local support is needed to ensure the initiative to succeed. Local communities in Kilim will be given an opportunity by LADA (Langkawi Development Authority) to manage Kilim. The opportunity given would change the standard of living of the villagers; they have to learn to adapt to the new environment when tourist from other parts of the world come to Kilim. In addition Kilim community members represent more than hundred members but only 15 important people are involved in Kilim community organizations. From the KPEP community book, there are 82 boats from 29 owners of the boats.

Tourism Development in Langkawi

Development in Langkawi into a tourist destination started in the early 1980's. The development not only benefits the local people but it also opens up avenues for tourism activities that transforms Langkawi into a popular tourist destination at the international level. In 1987 when Langkawi was declared as a duty free zone, and with continued investment effort from government and the private sectors, Langkawi has been turned into a popular shopping center, a haven for local and foreign tourist.

Some policies have been carried out to promote the state's tourism development. For example, the State Structure Plan Policy 2002-2020 (Draf Rancangan Struktur Negeri Kedah) which produces three major policies and implementation measures to achieve the specified policy. The first policy is to strengthen and enhance the tourism industry as the main economic drivers of Kedah, tourism development focusing on two zone, one main zone in Langkawi and other support zone such as Kota Star, Padang Terap and Sik and Yan. The Second policy is to upgrade tourism infrastructures in terms of tourism support facilities accessibility, the third policy is to diversify the sources of new tourism so as to increase attraction in mainland Kedah (Johan Affendi and Mohamad Zaki, 2008)

In figure 1 it is stated that the establishment of the development in Langkawi starting in 1987 until 2007 and the development is still undergoing. Ibrahim Kamoo (2011) said that the initiative of LADA to bring the development either Kilim or Langkawi as a whole has totally transformed the island into a modern tourist

destination. This initiative also increased the local community livelihood and has motivated the local people to participate in tourism industries.

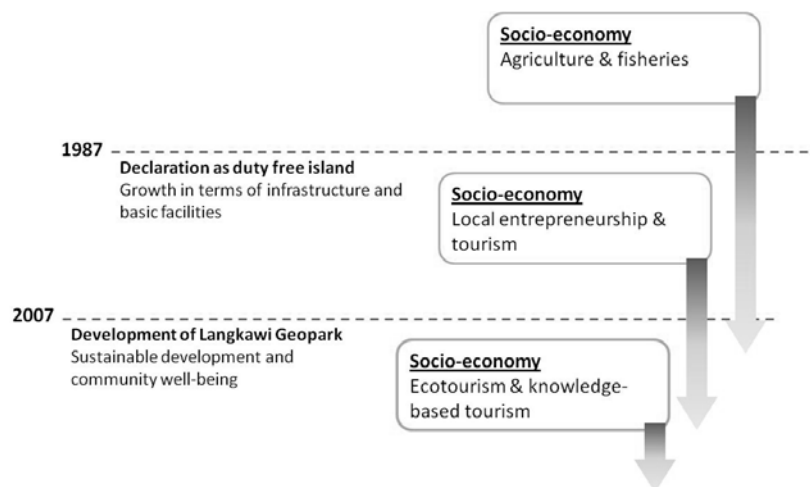


Figure 1: Processes of socio-economic development in Langkawi
Source: Halim, Komoo, Salleh and Omar (2011)

Langkawi Tourism Blueprint

Langkawi Tourism Blueprint launched for the five year plan starting 2011 to 2015 and contains three themes which are product, infrastructure and enablers. These initiatives adhere to the guiding principles. First, they support a cohesive vision of Langkawi as a nature and eco-destination. Second, they build on Langkawi's existing strengths with an eye towards becoming truly world class, so as to maximize the island's competitive advantage with other island destinations. These initiatives also aim to improve the living standards of Langkawians, in terms of their income levels and quality of life. Finally, the Blueprint has paid close attention to the issue of implementation as we recognize that a plan is only as good as its execution. (LADA, 2012).

The Kilim development project covers an area of 3.84 hectares which is devoted to four major projects; upgrade facilities at Kilim jetty and facilities in the swamps, diversion facilities at the jetty fishing and the Discovery Center. If the transformation is successful, it will not only make Langkawi more advanced, the whole population will benefit from it. The Manager of Planning and Development of the Langkawi Development Authority (Lada), Dr Noor Yazan Zainol said that the Discovery Centre would serve as an archive and reference point on Geoparks in this country, especially in Langkawi. "Filling this center will be applied to the segment geology, flora and fauna, socio-cultural and international," he said. The project will start on February 2012, worth more than RM20 million and is expected to be completed within two years.

Tourism Development in Kilim, Geopark

In figure 2 it is shown that the Geopark development given emphasizes three developments which are heritage conservation, economic development and community development. This plan also included Kilim Karst Geopark (Ibrahim Kamoo, 2011).

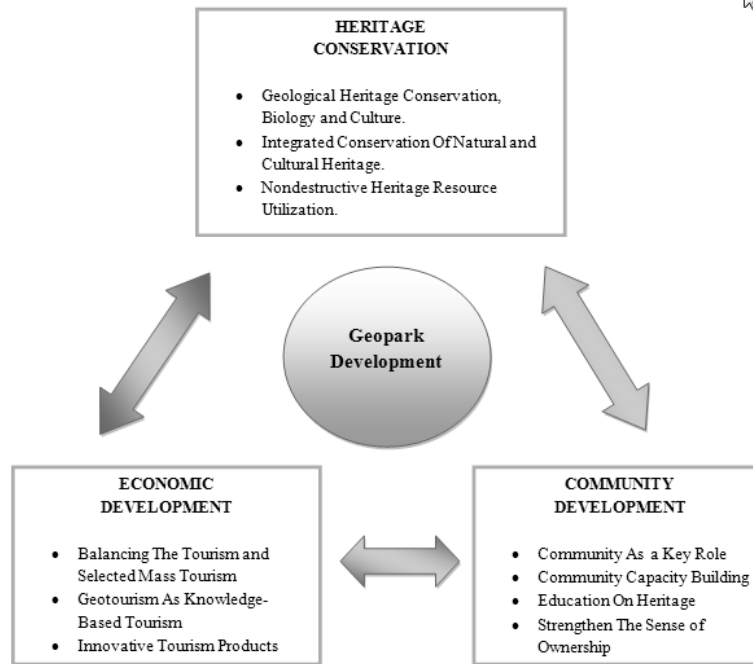


Figure 2: Geopark Development Framework: a focus on balancing the needs of conservation, economy and well-being of the community Development Division

On 1 June 2007, Langkawi Island has been declared by UNESCO as a heritage site “Langkawi Geopark” is Malaysia’s first established Geopark located in the far northwestern corner of Peninsular Malaysia. Geopark includes three different places namely Machinchang Cambrian Geopark, Kilim Karst Geopark and Dayang Bunting Marble Geopark. However this paper only focused on the Kilim Karst Geopark.

A few years ago local community in Kilim depended on fisheries and agricultural activities. In Langkawi Island there are six KPSP (*Komuniti Pengurusan Sumber Perikanan*), are located in the sub-district, one of them is KPSP Kilim (Ayer Hangat district). But according to Deputy Head of the village in Kilim, now the name of KPSP was changed to KPEP (*Kumpulan Pengurusan Ekosistem Perikanan*) to suit with the tourism products that are available around the Kilim Geopark for example Pulau Dangli (fish feeding), Bat Cave, Eagle Feeding and etc. In Kilim, the majority of local fisher folks has moved to become boat operators managers of ecotourism activities in the Kilim Karst Geopark. The association has been able to provide alternative employment for many of its members, from traditional fisherman to tour boat operators, resulting in increasing income and quality of life (Sharina,2011).

In Kilim Karst Geopark, human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labor and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and to achieve their livelihood objectives.

Table 1: Type of skills observed in Kilim source by Sharina, (2011)

Type of skill	Kilim (n=704)
Literacy	97.3
Fluent in other languages	29.8
Arts and crafts	16.3
Agriculture	17.9
Technical/vocational	2.3

Entrepreneurial	5.9
Tourism-based activities	1.8
Others	0.14

In table 1 it can be seen that with the assistant of relevant agencies and authorities the skill of local people has been upgraded. The table shows that the percentage of literacy is higher than other skills representing that the communities can adapt to the new environment brought about by tourism development.

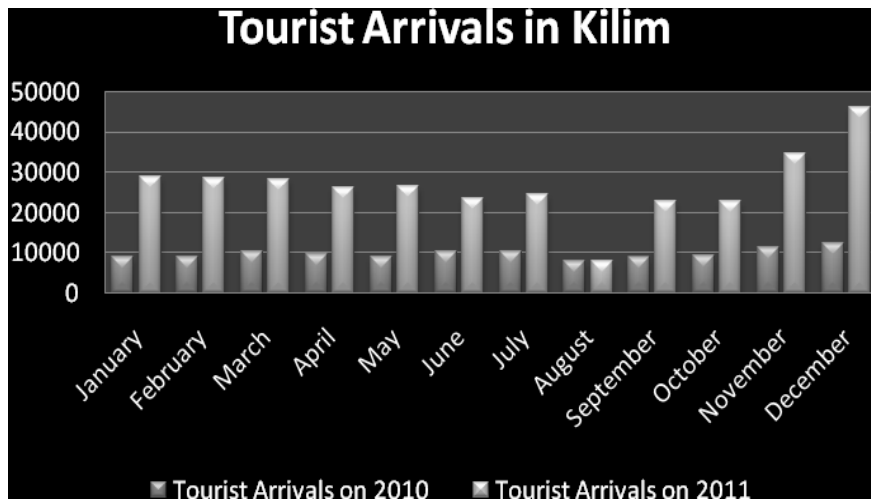


Figure 3: Tourist arrivals statistic in Kilim (Source: Koperasi Komuniti Kampung Kilim Langkawi Berhad, 2012)

In figure 3 it shows the tourist arrival in the Kilim Karst Geopark in 2010 and 2011. Tourist arrivals have increased every year and this helps to generate local community income from these involvements in the boat services and restaurant services. In addition Kilim also have one homestay, three restaurants in Kilim jetty, two restaurants in fish farm and two souvenirs shop. All this business has been run by local people.

Table 2: Employment sector on three localities on Langkawi Island

Sector	Padang Mat Sirat	Kilim (n=179)	Pulau Tuba (n=88)
Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Livestock rearing, Cottage industries.	17.5	12.3	27.3
Production, Processing	4.5	5.1	3.4
Wholesale, Grocer, Hotel, Restaurant	39.6	40.2	31.8
Service, Transportation, Others	38.5	2.3	37.5

Source: Halim, Komoo, Salleh and Omar (2011)

Table 2 show that in general the tourism development in Langkawi has major impacts in the wholesale sector, grocery operations, hotels and restaurants, followed by the service and transportation sector, and then agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

Table 3: Mean of total household monthly income

	Padang Mat Sirat	Kilim	Pulau Tuba
Total average household income per month	RM 1383	RM 1277.39	RM 609.91
Expenditure	RM 1262.41	-na-	RM 631.14
Savings	RM 211.26	-na-	RM 121.05

*Note: USD 1 = RM 3.10 (January 2011)

Source: Halim, Komoo, Salleh and Omar (2011)

Table 3 shows that household monthly income in three localities in Langkawi of interest is the monthly income of households in Kilim. It can be seen that communities in Kilim have reasonably high into the level.

Economic Impacts

Tourism contributes positive impacts in three crucial aims economic, environmental and social in the destinations. In the general tourism development has given impacts to the local community in Kilim.

According to Johan Afendi and Mohamad Zaki (2008) tourism gives positive impacts such as generate more income to the local communities, the give sites opportunities in employment in the supply of services. But tourist also gives a negative impacts to economy such as economic leakage, control destination by foreign investors, rising prices of goods and unhealthy competition between operators. This situation has happened in Kilim Karst Geopark, according to Deputy Head of the village in Kilim, the villagers support the development in Kilim, they like to mix around and easy to adapt with changes, tourism benefits the community as it they can generate more income. But tourism the development that happened too fast has little control on the number of tourists to come in Kilim. The sudden increased in tourist arrivals, some boatmen use this opportunity to gain more profit by taking overload passengers in one boat and also to increase speed that have resulted in erosion and mangrove destination. This can give a bad impression in the eyes of tourists who come to Kilim. There is a need to control the tourists so as to limit the use of boats and also establish a policy to prevent the speeding of the boat.

Conclusion

Tourism development in a destination sometimes may bring both positive and negative effects. Support from the government such as LADA, an NGO such as WWF and also from local community itself are needed to reduce the negative effect. In Kilim Karst Geopark the development has been carried out in accordance with the plan and it can be seen that it is giving more positive benefit than bad. To ensure that negative impacts is not increased, the development must done systematically according to the actual plan.

References

- Abd. Rahman bin Haji Zainol. (2011), Langkawi Geopark: Sumber Warisan Geologi Dalam Memperkasa Ekonomi dan Industri Pelancongan. *Lembaga Pembangunan Langkawi (LADA)*.

- Berita Harian Online. (2011). "Pelan Tindakan Pelancongan Lonjak Status Pulau Langkawi". Retrieved from <http://www.bharian.com.my/articles/PelantindakanpelanconganlonjakstatusPulauLangkawi/Article/>
- Economic Planning Unit of the Prime Ministers Department Malaysia. (2012). "Langkawi Blueprint 2011-2015". Retrieved from <http://www.epu.gov.my/thetourismlangkawiblueprint>
- Ibrahim Komoo. (2010). Geopark as a Model for Regional Sustainable Development. *Akademika 80 (December) 2010: 9-18.*
- Johan, A.I. & Mohamad, Z.A.. (2008). Penubuhan Geotaman Langkawi: Kesan Kepada Industri Pelancongan Langkawi. Universiti Utara Malaysia.
- Langkawi Geopark Official Website. (2012). Kilim Karst Geoforest Park. Retrieved from <Http://www.langkawigeopark.com.my/v2/index.php/geoheritage-a-geoforest-park/the-kilim-karst-geoforest-park> (assessed on 1 August 2012).
- Mais H. Akkawi (2010). *Resident Attitudes towards Tourism Development In Conservative Cultures: The Case of Qatar, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada.*
- Najib Tun Razak Official Website. (2012). Kilim Karst Geoforest Park. Retrieved from http://1malaysia.com.my/news_archive/blueprint-pelancongan-langkawi-perlukan-sokongan-penduduk-tempatan-najib/
- Peter Mason (2008). *Tourism Impacts, Planning and Management*. First Edition Elsevier Ltd
- Peter Mason (2008). *Tourism Impacts, Planning and Management*. First Edition Elsevier Ltd (quote from Wall 2011).
- Pak Omar (2012), *Deputy Head of the village in Kilim. Personal Communication*
- Sharma, 2004 in Fariboz and Ma'rof (2009). Community Perceptions toward Economic and Environmental Impacts of Tourism on Local Communities *Asian Social Science*, Vol. 5 No.7 2009.
- Sharina, A.H., Ibrahim, K., Hood, S. and Mustafa, O. (2011). The geopark as a potential tool for alleviating community marginality. *The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures. Volume 5, Number 1 2011, 94-113.*
- Sharina, A.H., Ibrahim, K., Hood, S. and Mustafa, O. (2011). Engaging the Local Community in Participatory Resource Management through Learning: The Experience from Langkawi Island, Malaysia. *Kajian Malaysia, Vol. 29, Supp. 1, 2011, 125-139.*
- Tourist arrivals statistic in Kilim. *Koperasi Komuniti Kampung Kilim Langkawi Berhad* (2012)