

CONFLICTS TO CONSENSUS: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES OF TIOMAN ISLAND TOURISM SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of an exploratory study regarding island tourism at a rural Island destination in Malaysia. The findings based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with a number of stakeholder groups are reported, which show the different views among them where there is a divergence between the four stakeholder groups with regards to the problems faced by Tioman Island. A total of 46 residents, tourists, and government officials were interviewed to understand the problems encountered on Tioman Island. The qualitative interviews uncovered 15 problems faced by the various stakeholder groups on the island. The results found that different stakeholders perceived things differently. This study may help tourism planners, developers, and policy-makers to understand the problems faced by the island so that strategies can be implemented accordingly, to assess, monitor, and evaluate problems.

Keywords: Responsible Tourism; Marine Resources; Community Involvement; Malaysia; Qualitative.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is an important sector to Malaysia due to its economic contributions (UNWTO, 2010). The beauty of the marine resources and beaches attract a great number of visitors to Malaysia (Yusoff, Shariff, & Gopinath, 2006). Due to the rich marine resources (Balong, 2004; Yusoff et al., 2006), beaches and islands are the main attractions of coastal recreation tourism in Malaysia (Wagiman, 1996). Malaysia has several famous islands e.g., Langkawi, Redang, Tioman, Sipadan, Mabul, which offer sun, sea, and sand activities for visitors. However, rural resources should be treated as a tourism capital (Siow et al., 2013).

Some scholars provide evidence that tourism is a significant contributor of economic growth and job creation for a country and islanders alike (Ahmad, Jusoh, & Wong, 2006; Budeanu, 2005; Poon & Low, 2005). Although there is a paucity of research on island tourism, specifically in Malaysia, those

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island tourism studies were mainly conducted on a few islands, such as Langkawi Island (Matthew, Shuib, Ramachandran & Herman, 2013; Ooi, 2006; Indraneil & Lim, 2000), Redang Island (Fisher et al., 2008; Yacob, Shuib, Mamat & Radam, 2007), Layang-layang Island (Musa, Kadir, and Lee, 2006), Tioman Island (Rahman, 2005; Balong, 2004; Basiron, 2004; Ahmad & Nik Mustapha, 1991; Ho, Chia, Ng & Ramachandran, 2017), Sipadan Island (Musa, 2002), islands near Semporna (Chia, Shuib, Ramachandran, & Mohammad Afandi, 2015), Penang Island (Kasim, 2004a, 2004b), and Banggi Island (Teh & Cabanban, 2007).

The study of the stakeholder's perception is considered to be a relatively new approach in tourism studies, particularly the inclusion of multiple stakeholder groups (Byrd, Bosley, & Dronberger, 2009; Stewart & Draper, 2007). Most available researches have only focused on a single dimension of a particular stakeholder group and only a few directly examine the four main stakeholder groups; namely, residents, business operators, tourists and government agencies. Stakeholder participation, in tourism development planning, has been widely discussed in tourism literature, but it has not been fully realised (Byrd, 2007; Siow, Ramachandran, Shuib, Mohammad Afandi, 2015). For example, Andriotis and Vaughan (2003) suggest that more research is required to identify the actual problems faced by island tourism from various stakeholders' perspective so that action can be solicited accordingly. Stakeholders should be allowed to take part in any decision-making as different stakeholders provide different opinions on ways to solve tourism problems (Ho et al., 2017).

Following their suggestion, this study gathers problems faced by Tioman Island via face-to-face interviews with the four stakeholder groups. In short, an extensive research was conducted on Tioman Island, concerning itself with environmental resources, biodiversity, and perception of residents and tourists. Limited research has been conducted on Tioman Island, to help understand tourism impacts, by using multiple stakeholder approach. Therefore, this study sheds some light to understand the problems, arisen from the study, better.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Stakeholder in tourism industry

Stakeholder theory has been a popular focus in business management literature. Freeman (1984), in his book *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*, defined a stakeholder as being "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by, the achievement of the organization's objectives" (p. 46). However, the theory has been used in tourism studies, not limited to business management. Although there are other stakeholder groups identified such as competitors, employees, National Business Chains, activist groups (Sautter & Leisen, 1999), those stakeholder groups are more relevant to business management perspectives and may not be suitable to all studies. It has been suggested that four stakeholder groups exist within the tourism industry; they are - tourists, residents, entrepreneurs, and governmental officials (Byrd et al., 2009; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2003). Ryan (2002) defines a stakeholder in tourism as being "...any individual or identifiable group who is affected by, or who can affect the achievement of corporate objectives" (p. 20).

The stakeholder theory was used in tourism research by Hardy and Beeton (2001) in their study of understanding stakeholder groups and their perception of sustainable tourism. This theory has also been used to assess stakeholder participation in tourism planning, as a tool to promote sustainable tourism development, where it was used to assess the support of three stakeholder groups (visitors,

residents and policy makers) from Pitsons Management Area, in St. Lucia (Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009). They found that the most significant problem, for the growth of sustainable tourism development, was caused by the lack of involvement of local residents in management and decision-making. As tourism stakeholders have always been considered as important key players that influence the success or failure of tourism destinations, their participation and involvement should be given consideration during tourism planning and development (Moyle, Glen Croy, & Weiler, 2010; Byrd, 2007; Kasim, 2006). It has been proved that benefits of involving the community have been comprehensively reported in tourism planning and management literature (Ho et al., 2017; Ling, Ramachandran, Shuib, Afandi, 2014)

2.2. Stakeholders' conflict and consensus

Problems and solutions are generally identified through collaboration by multiple stakeholders, rather than a standalone stakeholder (Okazaki, 2008); although conflicts may break-up stakeholder relationships, it may be not necessarily be a bad thing (Okazaki, 2008). This is because overlapping stakeholder interests may aid to overcome management problems. However, in some circumstances, stakeholder conflicts may not necessarily be a problem-solving tool (Mangi & Austen, 2008). Hence, conflicts can be reduced amongst stakeholders, by reaching a consensus, such as interaction, tension, understanding and acceptance (Sonmez & Apostolopoulos, 2000).

Collaboration management and community involvement are two ways to solve conflicts amongst stakeholders. The benefits of having community involvement in tourism planning and management have been identified in various literature (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005; Sirakaya, Teye, & Sönmez, 2002; Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Timothy, 1999; Joppe, 1996; Jamal & Getz, 1995; de Araujo & Bramwell, 1999). For example, involvement of the local community can ensure that decisions made are well informed and thus, reduces conflict between tourists and the host community, by listening to the voices of the host community (Swarbrooke, 1999). As different stakeholders may provide different opinions on ways to solve tourism problems (e.g. threats to resources) (Himes, 2007), all stakeholders should take part in decision making (Robson and Robson 1996) to reap the benefits such as increasing project efficiency and allowing stakeholder groups the chance to control and decide their resources, equity, and harmony (Nicholas et al., 2009).

Although sustainable tourism requires stakeholders' involvement, such effort is hard to achieve, especially within developing countries (Reddy, 2008; Timur & Getz, 2008; Ng, Chia, Ho, & Ramachandran, 2017). This is because of lack of local involvement in tourism development and their ability to capture new job opportunities. While failing to involve all of the relevant stakeholders may cause conflicts and may reinforce inequalities (Byrd, 2007; Timothy, 1999), it has been reported that local communities have not been participating or not even invited to participate in the decision-making and management of tourism resources (Ross & Wall, 1999). If tourists, business operators and locals have a stake and authority in tourism planning, they can provide their opinions and suggestion to improve the destination and reduce the impacts caused by tourism. Therefore, reaching consensus amongst the stakeholders is crucial for long-term sustainability.

2.3. Island tourism problems

Tourism provides huge economic benefits for most islands in Europe and it is the main source of income for islanders (García-Falcón & Medina-Muñoz, 1999). An expanding number of studies are focused on island tourism (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Bardolet & Sheldon, 2008; Fortuny, Soler,

Cánovas, & Sánchez, 2008; García & Servera, 2003; Hampton & Christensen, 2007; Kokkranikal, McLellan, & Baum, 2003; Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Moreno Gil, 2003); however only a few have been carried out in the Asian region (Kokkranikal et al., 2003; Wong, 1998).

An island's ecosystem is fragile (García-Falcón & Medina-Muñoz, 1999), which makes sustainability work more challenging. On top of dealing with common negative environmental impacts, island tourism faces a few unique problems derived from the island's geographical limitations, like small size, lack of natural resources, and isolation (Kerr, 2005; Lim & Cooper, 2009; Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). First, many small islands face problems during peak season due to its small size when large numbers of tourists' arrive at their destinations, leading to several problems. Swarbrooke (1999) outlined some problems, including water shortages, higher prices of goods, overcrowding, the feeling of locals being a minority in their own communities, and the pressure on local infrastructures. On the other hands, congestion affects local people's daily lives while tourism imposes pressure on local infrastructures, such as sewage systems and transportation networks.

Second, small islands encounter diseconomy of scale because their focus is only on small scale of economics and the limited availability of land and resources (Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008). Kerr (2005) divided these limitations of small islands into a few issues. These issues include monopolism of island economies, limited natural and human resources, diseconomies of scale in infrastructure development (Baum et al. 2016). Third, geographical isolation of island tourism suffers several problems. For example, isolation leads to difficult access from a large market and creates barriers to the residents and tourists visiting the island (García-Falcón & Medina-Muñoz, 1999). However, Scheyvens and Momsen (2008) argue that the isolation of an island makes the destination more attractive and exotic.

The cost of transport, unreliability of schedule, irregularity of transport, higher price of goods and services are the problems too (King & McVey, 1997). Therefore, many islands face accessibility problems, and consequently, travelling to an island is much more expensive than travelling on the mainland. In many Scottish Islands, this phenomenon becomes worst during peak seasons where ferry services are usually monopolised by only one ferry company (Swarbrooke, 1999). Moreover, the prices on an island are relatively higher than the mainland, due to the transportation costs involved in distributing goods to the islands (Swarbrooke, 1999; King & McVey, 1997). Since islands have limited economic choices; tourism is one of the choices for development (García-Falcón & Medina-Muñoz, 1999). Swarbrooke (1999) pointed out that most islands develop an airport; however this certainly leads to other environmental consequences.

Scheyvens and Momsen (2008) argue that previous studies tend to focus on the vulnerability of small islands and failed to identify their strengths. They further presented the six key strengths of small island tourism, particularly those in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and the Caribbean Sea. 1) Small is beautiful 2) Good economic performance 3) High levels of cultural, social, and natural capital 4) Respect for traditional, and holistic approaches to development 5) Strong international links and 6) Political strength. By recognizing their strengths, strategies for development could be developed into a small island state. Since there are so many problems identified in the islands, efforts should be taken toward a more sustainable tourism by putting in place strategies to maximize tourism benefits while managing potential problems, which could then make the islands principal destinations.

Wong (1998) identified several problems faced by island tourism such as limited resources (Scheyvens and Momsen, 2008; Twining-Ward and Butler, 2002), economic leakage (Connell, 2007;

Kokkranikal et al., 2003; Sathiendrakumar and Tisdell, 1989; Twining-Ward and Butler, 2002; Wong, 1998), water scarcity (Garcia & Servera, 2003; Gikas & Tchobanoglous, 2009; Gössling, 2002; Scheyvens & Momsen, 2008; Wong, 1998), and solid waste disposal (Prabhakaran, Nair, & Ramachandran, 2013; Fortuny et al., 2008; Green, 2005). From the island reviews of past studies, it has been found that some problems are common to most island destinations, like littering, water scarcity, environmental degradation, unplanned development, solid waste management, poor infrastructure services, and sewage disposal, while others are unique to island tourism such as monsoon waves, beach erosion and limited local food, and limited electricity access.

3. METHODOLOGY

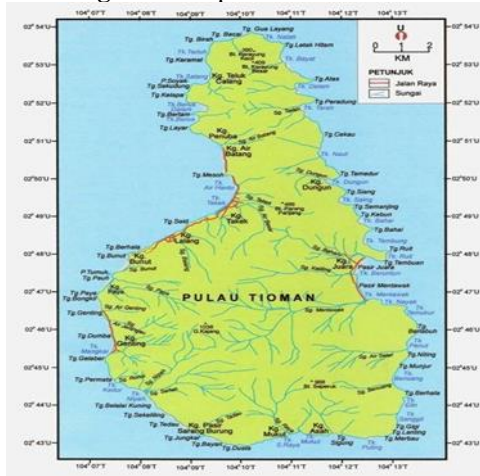
3.1. *Introducing the study region and research methods*

Tioman Island is situated off the east coast of Pahang State of Peninsular Malaysia (Tioman Development Authority, 2010). The island is reachable by ferry from the coastal town of Mersing, or from Tanjung Gemok. Alternatively, tourists may choose to fly there from Subang airport in Subang Jaya, Malaysia or Changi airport in Singapore. Since the 1990s, tourism has been the vital industry on this island and it is almost entirely geared towards tourism. Therefore, tourism activities become an important source of income for its local communities and most job opportunities (e.g. resorts, small restaurants, nature guides, and boat operators). The Island is the home to beautiful and diverse coral reefs and it has become a popular tourist destination, especially among underwater explorers (Economic Planning Unit, 2004). Besides enjoying the 3S's (e.g. sun, sea, and sand), there are others activities on Tioman Island (e.g. bird watching, boat sailing, jungle trekking and rock climbing). However, the island experiences the monsoon season, between December and early February. Therefore, some resorts are forced to close their business during this period.

The population of Tioman Island is approximately 3,000 people (Khoo, 2009). Tekek village, the most developed village, is considered to be the heart of Tioman with greater infrastructure and facilities compared with the others. Owing to its inaccessibility and remoteness, Mukut village at the southern tip of the island is considered to be a rural village in the eyes of the local community.

This beautiful island has been long recognised as 'The Jewel in the South China Sea'. It received international recognition when the beautiful beaches were featured in the 1958 box office hit musical, "South Pacific." Furthermore, in the 1970s, it was chosen as one of the world's ten most beautiful islands by TIME magazine (Shuib et al., 2005). On 28 September 1972, the island gained protection by the state government as it was gazetted as a wildlife reserve, due to its richness of flora and fauna (Abdul, 1999). In 1994, Tioman Island was gazetted as Marine Park under Fisheries Act, 1985 to protect its biodiversity (Economic Planning Unit, 2004). On February 2002, Tioman Island was declared as a duty-free island, and offers a wide selection of liquors and cigarettes at relatively cheap prices, compared to mainland Malaysia.

An exploratory qualitative research strategy was adopted in this study to identify the problems experienced on the island. The use of qualitative research tools is to investigate and evaluate certain new issues (Patton, 2002). The interviews comprised of two phases. Prior to these interviews, a walking tour to each village was done familiarise with the location and the types of businesses on the

Figure 1: Map of Tioman Island.

Source: Aimi (2014).

island. A semi-structured interview was designed with an aim of understanding the problems faced on Tioman Island and the seeking of support for the proposed study. Once the research planning was confirmed, the researcher proceeded to contact relevant respondents (government officers and heads of villages) via telephone to invite them to participate in interviews. However, some government officers and heads of villages were not able to cooperate, due to time constraints incurred by holidays, and some even refusing to take part in an interview. The researcher also requested the chalet managers to suggest possible respondents for the study. The researcher also approached the tourists at restaurants, on the beach, and in chalets.

Before the interviews began, interviewees were briefed on the purpose of the research and further asked the willingness to participate in the interview. The interviews were assisted by an interview schedule and as the interview proceeded, notes were taken and audio was recorded with the permission from interviewees. Most interviews with business operators were conducted in the Malay language; only one was in English. However, all interviews with tourists were conducted in English. A thematic analysis was then employed to identify problems into groups, according to themes suggested by Kozak (2001). The basic themed groups under the organising themes were based on the suggestion from Kozak's (2001) research work.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A total of 46 respondents were interviewed after the first and second round of qualitative data collection. The 46 interviews covered six main villages (Salang village, Paya village, Genting village, Tekek village, Mukut village, and Air Batang village). Table 1 shows the information of stakeholder groups based on gender and total number of interviewees. The majority of interviewees were local residents (39%) and, followed by tourists (37%). There were slightly more males than females in the sample, at 56% and 44% respectively.

Table 1: Gender and number of interviewee.

Stakeholder group	Male		Female		Total	%
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%		
Resident	12	46	6	30	18	39
Government officer	2	8	0	0	2	4
Business operator	5	19	4	20	9	20
Tourist	7	27	10	50	17	37
Total	26	100	20	100	46	100

15 problems were identified and furthered classified under five dimensions, namely economic, social, environmental, infrastructure & telecommunication, and institutional support. Table 2 presents the five dimensions according to the problems found.

Table 2: Classification of dimensions and problems.

Dimension	Problem
1.Economic	Economic leakages Unattractive Duty Free Shop Expensive Food and Beverage
2.Social	Neglect of the Local Community's Welfare Poor Personal Safety and Security
3.Environmental	Dirty Beaches Overdevelopment Issues
4.Infrastructure & telecommunication	Infrastructure and Telecommunication Ferry problem Shortage of Water Supply Interruption of Electricity Supply Limited Public Phone and Internet Access Limited Road Access Airport
5.Institutional support	Poor Marine Park Management Distrust between the Local Government (TDA) and Local communities

4.1. *Economic dimension*

4.1.1. *Economic leakages*

A study conducted by Yacob et al. (2007), found that a large proportion of employee's spending did not remain in Redang Island and this led to economic leakage, since most of the goods and services are imported from mainland. Similar to the case of Redang Island, economic leakages in Tioman Island are mainly caused by imported goods and hired outsiders.

Interviewees agreed that economic leakage was a problem on Tioman Island. Most businesses were owned and operated by local families; however, outside employees were hired mostly for low-paid, unskilled jobs, such as cleaning and other services. Interviewees pointed out that they found it hard to employ local workers and preferred to employ outsiders because local residents either did not have any interest or they had their own businesses. Thus, most business operators employed foreign workers, or workers from mainland.

4.1.2. Unattractive duty free shop

Duty free status was declared in Tioman Island to attract more tourist arrival. However, the establishment of duty free status yielded conflicts among the stakeholders, particularly for locals and business operators. Half of the interviewees viewed that the duty free zone was a “failure” and did not bring much benefit to tourism and islanders. First, they explained that the duty free shop was only limited to cigarettes and alcohol and it did not bring any benefit to the local community because the majority of them are Muslims and alcohol was prohibited. Moreover, some tourists did not even know of the existing duty free status.

Second, the duty free status on this island was perceived as unsuccessful compared to other duty free islands, such as Langkawi and Labuan. Other than cigarettes and alcohol, there were no other cheap duty free items that can be found like in Langkawi and Labuan, such as perfume, leather goods, confectionery, or luggage bags.

4.1.3. Expensive food and beverage

It was observed there was no standard price for food and beverage on this island. The charge varied from one village to another village. The food and beverage in some popular villages were slightly higher compared to other rural villages. Since there were no known studies that investigated price problems in island tourism in Tioman Island, this problem was considered as unique. In general, stakeholders agreed that the cost of things on the island was higher than on the mainland, due to boat and ferry transportation costs for goods.

4.1.4. Airport

There were conflicting views among stakeholders regarding the existing airport. For some stakeholders, the establishment of an airport was perceived as bringing drawbacks to tourism. Although the existence of an airport had caused side effects, there were different opinions from business operators. Some realized the need for a new airport to boost the economy of the island; the existence of an airport was needed for its economic benefits, particularly during the monsoon season. However, it must be built in a more strategic location.

4.2. Environmental dimension

4.2.1. Dirty beaches

In terms of environmental issue, stakeholders agreed that the environmental condition in Tioman Island had changed due to pollution and the attitude of various stakeholders. When asked about the problems facing the island, the first word to come from a tourist’s mind, was “rubbish”. One tourist expressed dissatisfaction on cleanliness, because rubbish was scattered everywhere. Garbage increases as the numbers of tourists increase, and this certainly contributes to the increase of solid waste, either by tourists or resorts (Kokkranikal et al., 2003). Although Tioman Island has two incinerators, one is permanently out of order. If the number of tourists increases rapidly, the additional solid waste will exceed the island’s management capacities (Economic Planning Unit, 2004).

In this study, low levels of cleanliness of beaches were mentioned and were frequently addressed by local residents and tourists. Meanwhile, business operators complained about poor solid waste

management. It was interesting to note that business operators near to the TDA did not experience this problem; for instance, Tekek village and Air Batang village because they took care of their own place.

4.2.2. Overdevelopment issues

On the other hand, interviewees stressed that Tioman Island would lose its attractiveness if it was overdeveloped. Interviewees agreed that the environment in Tioman Island had changed over time. They admitted that the development caused the coral reefs damage, pollution, and subsequently led to less beautiful beaches.

4.3. Social dimension

4.3.1. Neglect of the local community's welfare

Throughout the interviews conducted, local residents highlighted the levels in which their lives were compromised. First, as stakeholders, they were not involved in the tourism planning. Second, local residents lost their land when the government took them over for development purposes. Third, the medical benefits enjoyed by local communities were compromised. Locals faced difficulties during medical emergencies, e.g. accidents, as clinics did not provide proper medical treatment. In fact, the medical service provided on this island was limited to basic treatment. Finally, the local community complained the way the government allocated subsidized food.

4.3.2. Poor personal safety and security

As tourism plays a significant role in the socio-economics of a country, crime can be a significant threat to tourism (Ferreira, 1999). Tourists, as well as local residents, may feel uncomfortable and that their lives may be under threat due to poor personal safety and security. Interviewees admitted that drug abuse did happen on Tioman Island. With this issue, all stakeholder groups reached consensus that this was a problem.

4.4. Institutional support

4.4.1. Poor Marine Park management

Besides TDA, Department of Marine Park was perceived as another problematic government agency. Respondents did not think that department did their jobs and were not satisfied with them. Some interviewees revealed that the department collected RM5 conservation fees without doing any actual conservation.

4.4.2. Distrust between the local government (TDA) and local communities

This study has shown that the public authorities or government did not consult local communities on the process of tourism development and the government or public authorities often criticized the local communities for the lack of trust that existed amongst each other (Zamani-Farahani & Musa, 2008). One point that should be made from these interviews was that the majority of interviewees strongly claimed that the government did not deliver what they had promised to the local community. In addition, respondents were very angry and critiqued the government for not doing their jobs. Besides

that, it was found that law enforcement by the government was not strict. Interviewees were also concerned about the facilities and efforts for promoting tourism by the government. They thought that the government should show more concern and help them in their tourism promotion.

4.5. Infrastructure and telecommunication

4.5.1. Ferry problems

Ferry problems appeared to be another problem identified by stakeholder groups. The general consensus on ferry services was “bad” or “worst.” First, the ticket charged for ferry service was expensive for stakeholders, especially for tourists. Second, the poor ferry services affected businesses on Tioman Island, especially during peak seasons. The poor ferry service may cause the tourists cancel their trip.

Related to this argument, a monopoly on services was repeatedly mentioned by several interviewees. Moreover, local communities mentioned dissatisfaction with the ferry service during public holidays because of the congested sea traffic. Finally, the ferry service did not cover the whole island, as it did not go to certain villages, e.g. Juara village and Mukut village. Therefore, tourists and local communities must charter a boat to travel to those destinations at a very high cost.

4.5.2. Shortage of water supply

Water scarcity was another problems on the island. This problem would be worse during September and October as it has been known to be the dry season. To compound this, these months would also be the peak tourist season on the island. Therefore, the demand for fresh water would be high and the local community needed to share their water resources with the tourists. Some villages, e.g. Genting village, Paya village, Salang village, and Juara village, experienced limited alluvium and only Tekek village and Mukut village were considered to have more alluvial aquifers.

In fact, the water supplies in some villages were personally sourced water, in which chalet operators needed to search for own water supplies in order to run their businesses. However, the process of getting the water would incur high costs. Some business operators noted that the water problem affected their businesses, particularly during the dry season.

4.5.3. Interruption of electricity supply

Interruption of electricity and poor electricity supply causes significant problems to all stakeholder groups. In fact, there is one main electrical generator located at Tekek village and a few smaller generators in other villages. The main generator has become the heart of electricity supply on Tioman Island. However, the few smaller generators in other villages are old and do not function well. Interviewees expressed dissatisfaction as the problem affected local communities’ daily lives, especially during weekends or peak season, when not surprisingly, the electricity consumption would be relatively higher compared to weekdays and low season. Consequently, this definitely presents a bad image of chalet operators.

4.5.4. *Limited public phone and internet access*

Internet access is becoming important for travellers nowadays, where some would even bring their laptops or smart phones while travelling, to update, to share their travelling experiences on blogs, to check email, and to read the news. The Internet charge is at RM8 to RM10 per hour and most villages still use a dial-up connection or lower speed connection, instead of a high-speed connection. In addition, mobile phone reception is intermittent on the island and some villages are limited to certain networks. Besides that, there are limited public phones on the Island and some of these are out of order.

4.5.5. *Limited road access*

Generally, there are no proper paved roads on the island, apart from the short stretch between the airport and a luxury resort, as well as a stretch of road between Tekek village and Juara village. The rest of the island is accessed by walking tracks through the forest. The distance Tekek village and Juara village is approximately 7 kilometres, and it takes about 40 minutes by a four wheeled drive car. Most main roads are connected by tiny roads for pedestrians and motorbikes. Interviewees revealed that road access was an alternative to sea. However, stakeholder blamed the government for not building proper paved roads.

5. DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

In order to sustain the rural economy in Malaysia, particularly in an island context, tourism is perhaps one of the ways to reduce the level of poverty within these communities and improve their livelihood. Therefore, preserving the environment and natural resources, involving all levels of stakeholders in tourism development, improving public transportation and basic infrastructure, are essential. It is also important to ensure infrastructure and facilities in Tioman Island are good to attract more visitors and encourage revisitations.

This study identifies problems faced by Tioman Island in developing sustainable tourism. The results of the qualitative semi-structured interviews and detailed descriptions of the themes extracted from the interviews have been presented above, in order to discover the problems currently faced by Tioman Island. Throughout the 46 interviews, the four stakeholders perceived problems differently; however, some problems overlapped in consensus. Of the 15 problems found, 13 problems have been reported in one or more island literature. However, two problems (unattractive duty free shop and expensive food and beverages) have not been reported elsewhere but are newly introduced to the literature on Tioman Island. These two problems have not been recorded in previous island research literature on Tioman Island indicates that problems faced by island tourism are not standardized. Each island differs in its size, composition of stakeholder groups, government official structure and many other factors. Thus it is only appropriate to look at each island as a unique tourism destination that requires separate research attention.

Conflicting viewpoints regarding the problems faced are perceived differently. Therefore, reaching consensus among stakeholder is important to sustain the island's economic longevity. When consensus is reached amongst stakeholders, they also know the solutions to solve the problems. Despite the conflicts found in the study, stakeholders reached to some consensus on several issues. Stakeholders agreed that tourism brings income for the locals. However, ferry issues, unattractive

duty free shop, shortage of water emerged as the most significant concerns for stakeholders. There is also general agreement by locals that Mukut village is a rural village.

The findings indicate that majority of stakeholders seem to be quite satisfied with sandy beaches and the environment, however they hope the environment can be maintained and preserved. Stakeholders are concerned that the island will lose its attractions and popularity due to the environmental degradation, particularly for the local and business operators, as they rely on tourism as their main source of income. Much like other islands in the world, Tioman Island experiences some of the characteristic and shortcomings of small islands. The research findings may help tourism planners, developers, and policy-makers to understand the current problems faced by the island so that strategies can be implemented accordingly to assess, to monitor, and to evaluate problems.

With the availability of attractive natural resources, Tioman Island has the potential to become the popular island destination for those in or outside Malaysia. However, efforts should be implemented to sustain the island's resources. Tourists should be educated on sustainable practice, to raise their environmental consciousness. Tourists should be informed the do's and don'ts when they are in Tioman Island. For example, tourists are prohibited to do these activities: fishing, collecting of sand or rubble, collecting or capturing any marine resources whether dead or alive, stepping on or breaking off the corals, polluting and littering and fish feeding. This can be done by distributing guidelines or brochures to tourists before entering Tioman Island, either by air or sea. In addition, tourists should be educated to conserve water by turning off the water tap when not in use, and to follow resort guidelines provided by resorts.

It is expected that the number of visitors to Tioman Island will continue to grow, which would certainly increase the capacity pressure on the island. The rapid tourism development with its accompanying high tourist arrivals, are seen as factors that may destroy the island's ecosystem. Thus, TDA and business operators should be prepared to manage the high tourist influx during peak seasons by ensuring water supplies are adequate to meet the demand for all parties. For example, rainwater collection should be practiced in resorts, where rainwater tanks can be used to collect rain directly so that no water is lost during dry season. TDA should have proper planning and management to avoid negative impacts such as pollution and overdevelopment. TDA may also need to cooperate with ferry companies and airline companies to increase the frequency during the peak season. In order to sustain in the long-term, proper planning and sustainable tourism policies should be implemented.

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