

PAPER • OPEN ACCESS

Challenges in Creating Ecotourism in Rural Area: A Case of RK Eco Farm Business Venturing

To cite this article: A Ab Rahman *et al* 2020 *IOP Conf. Ser.: Earth Environ. Sci.* **596** 012050

View the [article online](#) for updates and enhancements.

Challenges in Creating Ecotourism in Rural Area: A Case of RK Eco Farm Business Venturing

A Ab Rahman¹, N Zainol¹, A Ramli¹ and H Manzoor².

¹Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, City Campus, 16100 Kota Bharu, Kelantan, Malaysia¹,

²Institute of Business Studies, Kohat University of Science Technology, Pakistan²

Email: raihani@umk.edu.my

Abstract. The objectives of this article is to reveal the findings on the challenges encountered by a small business venture in the process of developing ecotourism that preserve the natural environment in rural area. Study on the natural resources and ecotourism has been indicated through the symbiotic relationship discourses. However, less research has been done on the lenses of business venturing that promote ecotourism and natural environment. The effective development of small business venturing that preserve the environment is significant for sustainability development for environment. Qualitative research methodology was adopted to understand this phenomenon utilising interpretive paradigm. Hence, this study is not mean for statistical generalization as indicated for objectivism paradigm. Six participants that contain of the founder, the manager, the workers, and three other participants are involved in this study. Accordingly, in-depth interview techniques as main data sources had been adopted for data collection to understand the phenomenon. Six participants with three times attempt for in-depth interview has been executed. To ensure the robustness of the information, direct observation and photograph also been utilised. Thematic technique was used for data analysis. The findings indicate that waste management, farm safety, and society awareness are the challenges that encountered by the entrepreneur in small business venturing that relates to ecotourism and natural environment. Future research should research further on this issue within the different context.

1. Introduction

Sustainability development that indicated by UNDP mentioned about the important to preserve the environment. This is a part of economic and social well being in the world for reduce the poverty and sustainable development (UNDP, 2015). However, most of ecosystem services are used unsustainably and continue to be degraded in terms of environmental protection. In fact, the environmental quality and access to natural resources are closely connected to the livelihoods; health and security of human live in rural area (Nahuelhual, Carmona, Lozada, Jaramillo, & Aguayo, 2013). Greatly expanded ecotourism activities in the productivity of this environmental sphere can contribute to poverty reduction (Butcher, 2011). Hence, ecosystem has to be maintained regardless the force of capitalist development (Tseng, Lin, Lin, Wu, & Sriphon, 2019). One of the economic spinners is the tourism industry. Tourism industry helps the country such as Malaysia to prosper (Sopha, Jittithavorn, & Lee, 2019). According to Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture in Malaysia reported that there are 26.10 million tourists arrival in Malaysia in 2019. Most of tourist chooses the rural areas with high value natural resources such as lakes,



waterfalls, and mountains, in turns, impacted the sustainability of natural environment. However, to ensure the sustainability of natural environment, the ecotourism should be focused. Most of the research focus on the ecotourism and natural environment but overlook the actor that play the important roles who operate the ecotourism business venture. Therefore, this article aims to seek experience from the entrepreneurs within the context of business venturing to understand the challenges that been encountered.

2. Literature Review

This case study will explain the ecotourism and natural environment, eco tourism in rural areas, and eco tourism business venturing. Ecotourism has proven to be an effective concept in the sustainable utilization of natural resources and development of various communities (Libosada, 2009). Thus, ecotourism concepts coupled with social, cultural, and economic considerations should be developed and practiced by business venture that use this concept as a conservation tool.

2.1. Eco tourism and natural Environment

Eco tourism and natural environment shared mutual benefit between ecotourism development and natural resource conservation that known as symbiotic relationship (Boley & Green, 2016). This relationship explained the need of protected areas for tourism, and vice versa (Eagles, McCool, Haynes, & Phillips, 2002). In other words, eco tourism and natural environment resulted on sustainable development and ecosystem protection of ecotourism that rely on each other for success. According to Gossling (1999), most of the biodiversity hotspot in the world are located in regions with particularly has the potential of attractive ecotourism. This potential contributes greatly to ecotourism development that leads to a better quality of life. Eco tourism and natural environment are essential due to the fast growing environmentalists recognition, which having a difficult time using bio centric, intrinsic motivations to protect natural environment (Boley & Green, 2016). The reason to protect the natural environment is due to the ecotourism demand and ecosystem services. Thus, ecotourism has the potential to protect biodiversity through economic incentives for conservation that outweigh the opportunity cost of environment for other consumptive uses (Coria & Calfuria, 2012).

2.2. Eco Tourism in Rural Area

In rural areas, the local communities respond in a difference ways to ecotourism development that figured by their culture and values (Chaminuka, Groeneveld, Selomane, & Van Ierland, 2012). In addition, Telfer & Sharpley (2008) expand the other factors including the nature and scale of the particular ecotourism development, the particular structure/ownership of the ecotourism industry, the stage of development/maturity of the ecotourism industry; and the degree of involvement or benefits that the individual receives from ecotourism. Ecotourism is becoming an increasingly phenomenon that require sustainability to contribute to communities in terms of maintain the natural and cultural heritage (Kiper, 2013). Ecotourism in rural areas engaged community to tourism activities or ventures that based on natural or cultural assets and attractions (Nelson, 2004). This activity is frequently put forward as a tool for environmental conservation and local livelihood towards sustainable development (Koelble, 2011). Mitchell & Ashley (2010) believe that ecotourism has a huge potential in rural areas to offer a viable and sustainable assets use alternatively that can reduce the impact on environment. While, Eagles et al., (2002) divide the benefits of ecotourism into 3 major categories, which are enhancing economic opportunity, protecting natural and cultural heritage, and enhancing quality of life.

2.3. Ecotourism Business Venturing

Ecotourism business ventures are characterized by high environmental consideration, control enhancement, and local residents involvement (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2019). This concept is clearly distinguished from other ecotourism ventures that are largely managed by outside operators and generate negligible benefits for local people (Scheyvens, 1999). Thus, this concept engage the local participation to share their views, take part in an activity, project, program, decision-making, profit sharing and other

issues related to the tourism development process. Business venturing in ecotourism makes the project sustainable and attains the establishments of objective (Mbaiwa & Stronza, 2009). Ecotourism help the business venture to receive sufficient benefits to develop positive attitude towards their development. Numerous researchers found that the importance of business venture including the perceptions, values and interest of the local people in where the ecotourism resource/destination is found (Vincent and Thomson, 2002). Some of the researcher agrees that local people engagement should be encouraged from the beginning through participating in the decision making process (Diamantis, 2004).

3. Methodology

In order to understand the phenomenon of small business venturing process that relates to ecotourism and natural environment; which looks at the challenges issues, this study adopted qualitative research methodology with interpretive paradigm and utilizing symbolic interactionism theory as theoretical underpinning (Lee & Saunders, 2005). Therefore, statistical analysis even a basic analysis such as percentage is not being utilized in this study because it will contradict with interpretive paradigm. The context of this study also is explained below.

3.1. RK Eco Farm as a context

RK Eco Farm is a new small business venturing within the ecotourism industry. The farm is located at Kampung Kemudi, Bachok 16300, Kelantan. It located at village in rural area and alongside the Kemasin river. The concept of the farm is green integrated farming. The farm contains three goat shelter that can accommodate 100 goats for each shelter. The goat shelter was built from construction waste product. The farm also has a spot for cow and calf. These animals are feed with the green grass that has been plated alongside the river. The farm also planted papaya three. The rabbit shelter and chicken tunnel for chicken are also in the pipeline. The tourists can stay at village's homestay and eat at the restaurant alongside the main road which is only one kilometer from the riverside. Furthermore, the tourist also can undergo fishing activities alongside the river but must be aware with the crocodiles. RK Eco Farm is the unit of analysis for this study.

3.2. Paradigm and research Approach

This research believes that the actors in the field are the best person to explain the phenomenon. In line with that, this study has utilized the in interpretive paradigm. Hence, this study is not mean for statistical generalization as indicated for objectivism paradigm (Ab Rahman, . Therefore, the idealist ontology and the constructivism epistemology are adopted to understand the phenomenon (Saunders, 2019). Thus qualitative approach is the most suitable approach to achieve the research objective.

3.3. Data sources and analysis

Six participants that contain of the founder, the manager, the workers, and three other participants are involved in this study. The data sources for this study are interview, direct observation and photograph. In-depth interview technique is the main data sources for data collection that streams from the founder, manager and workers. This study also has utilized other voices in the field that also part of this phenomena such as other farmers and the homestay owner. Direct observation and photograph also have been utilized to ensure the robustness of the information (Venkatesh, Brown, and Bala, 2013). The interview transcript is the main data sources. Six participants with three times attempt for in-depth interview has been executed. Information from direct observation and photograph are the evidence that support the information from interview. Thematic technique was used for data analysis (Rojon, Saunders, & McDowall, 2016). This study utilizes Narrative thematic for first cycle coding and Themes Coding for second cycle coding (Ab Rahman, 2019).

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings show that the RK Eco Farm do have challenges during the small business venturing process. Knowing this challenges are important to ensure the problems encountered by the farm can be solved at early stage of small business venturing. The challenges are waste management, farm safety, and society awareness.

4.1. Waste Management

It is found that managing animal waste is quite a challenge for the entrepreneur. The entrepreneur does not have any idea on how to manage the animal drop. As he said *'I just let the drop for a week. Collect it and burn it'*. The intention and the action are not inline. The intention of the entrepreneur is to create the eco farm and yet he do not utilize the animal drop for other purposes such as fertilizer. This action indicated that the entrepreneur struggle in managing the waste from the animal drop. This actions also lead to the risk of animal health.

Other farmers also indicate the same challenges. From the observation, one of the farmers that have rabbit farm just let the animal drop on the ground. He said *'I just let the rabbit drop on the ground. My chicken will eat those dropping'*. The action indicates that their action less contributes to the ecotourism business venturing activities. The place is smelly that unattractive for visitors.

4.2. Farm Safety

It is found that the animal safety is one of the challenges that encounter by the entrepreneur. The entrepreneur has to make decision on just let their animals run around the farm or just stay at the shelter. The free range animal is more ecofriendly rather than keeping the animals at the shelter all the time. *'I afraid that the thief will take my goats. Last week, my neighbor experience it. Their goats are being transport using kancil (kancil is referring to a small car)'*. Therefore, the entrepreneur always in fear in managing the ecotourism small business venture.

The direct observation on the issues also indicates that the area is not a safe area. The household around the farm and also neighborhood village are from the low income society. The risk is there and it limit the actions of the entrepreneur to contribute fully in ecotourism small business venturing.

4.3. Society awareness

It is found that the society is reluctant to accept guest even though the society have small scale homestay around the farm. The society is not aware enough on the benefit of ecotourism that contribute to environmental perseverant. *'I have spoken to the owner of the homestay and also the house owner around the farm. They not interested to receive a lot of guest to be entertained. They are happy with their current condition and not looking to find more money'*. Therefore, the cooperation from the society to create a holistic ecotourism ecosystem are challenging.

The direct observation indicates that the house owners are the pensioner and also a small farmer. They are senior citizen and they depend on the money that their children give. They love to live in the small village at rural area and enjoy the greenness scenery. They do not aware that their natural environment can be shared with other people and at the same time they will gain profit from the ecotourism activities. Thus, the society cooperation should enhance the ecotourism activities and promote ecotourism business venturing.

5. Conclusion

Ecotourism is one of strategy for poverty elimination. The natural environment can be used as the resources for entrepreneurs' business venturing. At the same time, entrepreneurs can help the rural area society around by generating income from ecotourism ecosystem such as homestay and restaurant. Furthermore, the current generation is very concern about natural resources and green environment. The creation of ecotourism will attract their attention and create a large market for ecotourism industry.

However, the entrepreneur as main actor in this phenomenon encounter challenge in creating and sustain their small business venture. The findings indicate that waste management, farm safety and

society awareness are the hurdle in managing the eco farm as the icon for ecotourism activities. Unmanageable waste management harm the animals and waste the natural resources. Security issues lead to farm safety and society awareness do not contribute to successful ecotourism ecosystem. Future research should address those issues by giving a solid solution that based on technological perspective. It will help to boost the ecotourism industry in rural area and help the society at large.

References

- [1] Ab Rahman A A, Yaacob M R, Ibrahim M A H, Shaupi A N S, Permarupan P Y, Md Shuaib A S 2019 Measuring the Remode entrepreneurship training programme at behaviour level of Kirkpatrick Model in Aquaculture Industry. *Research in World Economy* **10** 2
- [2] Boley B B, & Green G T 2016 Ecotourism and natural resource conservation: The ‘potential’ for a sustainable symbiotic relationship. *Journal of Ecotourism*. **15** 1 pp 36-50
- [3] Butcher J 2011 Can ecotourism contribute to tackling poverty? The importance of ‘symbiosis’. *Current Issues in Tourism*. **14** 3 pp 295-307
- [4] Chaminuka P, Groeneveld R A, Selomane A O, & Van Ierland E C 2012 Tourist preferences for ecotourism in rural communities adjacent to Kruger National Park: A choice experiment approach. *Tourism management*. **33** 1 pp 168-176
- [5] Coria J, & Calfucura E 2012 Ecotourism and the development of indigenous communities: The good, the bad, and the ugly. *Ecological Economics*. **73** pp 47-55
- [6] Diamantis D 2004 *Ecotourism: management and assessment*. Cengage Learning EMEA.
- [7] Eagles P F, McCool S F, Haynes C D, & Phillips A 2002 *Sustainable tourism in protected areas: Guidelines for planning and management*. vol. 8 (Gland: IUCN)
- [8] Gössling S 1999 Ecotourism: a means to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystem functions?. *Ecological economics*. **29** 2 pp 303-320
- [9] Kiper T 2013 Role of ecotourism in sustainable development. InTech.
- [10] Koelble T A 2011 Ecology, economy and empowerment: Eco-tourism and the game lodge industry in South Africa. *Business and Politics*. **13** 1 pp 1-24
- [11] Lee N, Saunders J, & Goulding C 2005 Grounded theory, ethnography and phenomenology. *European Journal of Marketing*.
- [12] Libosada Jr C M 2009 Business or leisure? Economic development and resource protection— Concepts and practices in sustainable ecotourism. *Ocean & Coastal Management*. **52** 7 pp 390-394
- [13] Mbaiwa J E, & Stronza A L 2009 The challenges and prospects for sustainable tourism and ecotourism in developing countries. *The SAGE Handbook of Tourism Studies*. SAGE Publications, London pp 333-351
- [14] Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaaysia 2019 Retrieving on 18 july, from <http://www.motac.gov.my/en/services/open-data>
- [15] Mitchell J, Ashley C 2010 *Tourism and Poverty Reduction: Pathways and Prosperity*; Earthscan: London, UK.
- [16] Mtapuri O, & Giampiccoli A 2019 Tourism, community-based tourism and ecotourism: a definitional problematic. *South African Geographical Journal*. **101** 1 pp 22-35
- [17] Nahuelhual L, Carmona A, Lozada P, Jaramillo A, & Aguayo M 2013 Mapping recreation and ecotourism as a cultural ecosystem service. An application at the local level in Southern Chile. *Applied Geography*. **40** pp 71-82
- [18] Nelson F 2004 *The evolution and impacts of community-based ecotourism in northern Tanzania* (No. 131). London: International Institute for environment and development.
- [19] Rojon C, Saunders, M. N., & McDowall, A. 2016 Using qualitative repertory grid interviews to gather shared perspectives in a sequential mixed methods research design. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods on Human Resource Management*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

- [20] Saunders J 2019. Hegel, Norms, and Ontology. *History of Philosophy Quarterly*. **36** 3 pp 279-297
- [21] Scheyvens R 1999 Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities. *Tourism management*. **20** 2 pp 245-249
- [22] Sopha C, Jittithavorn C, & Lee T J 2019 Cooperation in health and wellness tourism connectivity between Thailand and Malaysia. *International Journal of Tourism Sciences*. **19** 4 pp 248-257
- [23] Telfer D J, & Sharpley, R. 2008: *Tourism and Development in the Developing World*. London, UK & New York, NY: Routledge.
- [24] Tseng M L, Lin C, Lin C W R, Wu K J, & Sriphon T 2019. Ecotourism development in Thailand: Community participation leads to the value of attractions using linguistic preferences. *Journal of cleaner production*. **23** 1 pp 1319-1329
- [25] United Nation Development Program 2015 Retrieving on 18 July, from <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>
- [26] Vincent V & Thompson W 2002 Assessing community support and sustainability for ecotourism development, of *Travel Research*. **41** 2 pp 153-160
- [27] Venkatesh V, Brown S A, & Bala H 2013 Bridging the qualitative-quantitative divide: Guidelines for conducting mixed methods research in information systems. *MIS quarterly*. pp 21-54