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Making Places: Youth Attachment towards Rice Field Activities in Creating a Sense of Place in Malaysia's Homestays

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Abstract

Homestay programme is getting popular among tourists and plays an important role to promote local cultural economy. Homestay programme is a normal form of community-based tourism that offers tourists and local communities to experience local lifestyle and heritage culture. One of the interesting culture is paddy field activities which are currently getting sidelined due to urbanisation. This has resulted villagers especially youth lose their attachment and values on this activity. This paper aims to explore attachment among youth in rural areas to paddy field activities in homestay programmes. This study also identifies type of activities related to paddy field that is suitable for homestay as well as for daily lives. Data was gathered using observation and semi-structured interview from three different homestays in Kedah, Malaysia which is Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai, Homestay Kg. Jeruju and Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing. Finding of study shows that there were several activities that attached youth to get involved in paddy field activities including activities within nature-based environment setting and activities within man-made settings.

Keywords: Homestay Programme, Community-Based Tourism, Attachment

Introduction

Attachment to a place is grounded in emotion comes from the literature on displacement, when individuals must leave their places such as in the event of a natural disaster or war, immigration, or relocation. Studies by Fried (1963) in the West End of Boston found that residents lost familiar structures and social settings after a neighborhood redevelopment project. These changes essentially caused the community bonding to disappear. After that, residents mourned and showed signs of grief. Fried concluded that grief is not only about the loss of loved ones, but also about the loss of a place. Fullilove (1996) also determined that displacement causes feelings of sadness and longing, thus concluding that attachment is largely formed through affect. Place can represent emotions, including love, fear, hate, and ambivalence (Manzo, 2005). Childhood homes can be significant places, but this does not necessarily mean that a positive bond was formed. People may rather develop negative

emotions towards a place if they have unhappy or traumatic experiences there. This paper aims:

- To explore attachment among youth in rural areas to paddy field activities in homestay programmes.
- To identify type of activities related to paddy field that is suitable for homestay as well as for daily lives.

Literature Review

People who are attached to places, such as cities, schools, and neighborhoods (Scannell et al., 2016), develop personal memories that are embedded in those places. A youth's attachment to a place determines their likelihood of getting involved (Flanagan et al., 2007; Lenzi et al., 2013). The place dimension has largely been explored among youth by looking at socio-cultural characteristics of places (i.e., the social sub-dimension) to which they have an attachment, particularly communities. Youth can develop a strong sense of place by participating in social environments characterized by positive relationships with adults (Zeldin et al., 2013). A social environment that allows youth to feel valued and respected by adults in their community has been linked to place attachment among youth (Whitlock, 2007).

Furthermore, youth are more likely to form positive bonds in places where adults respect and care for them than in places where they feel disrespected (Whitlock, 2007). Because it describes places that promote social interactions and bonds, the place dimension is sometimes compared to a sense of community or a sense of belonging (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). There has been less research on the physical sub-dimension of youth community-based place attachment. The available research has focused on understanding the meanings that a location's physical characteristics represent to young people. Knez (2005), for example, proposed that climate, an objective characteristic of a setting, subjectively influences attachment to places associated with one's childhood.

According to the literature on the process dimension, place attachment boosts youth self-esteem and increases their trust in peers and adults (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). As a result, attachment has been shown to foster a sense of community in young people (Nowell et al., 2006). Although the relationship has been proposed, much more research is needed to better understand the meanings of place attachment among youth and how it manifests itself. Numerous studies on place attachment have concentrated on rural, scenic, and residential settings. Place attachment research is important because it relates to the relationship between places and human identity (Manzo, 2003), delving into memories from the past to the future, including dreams, wishes, and concerns (Butz, 1997; Kruger, 2000). Those who are emotionally attached to a location perceive it.

Pleasing physical and social features encourage place attachment by attracting and involving people in an area. Place attachment varies between neighbourhoods with objectively different environmental quality. To summarise, place attachment can influence one's assessment of a location's quality, and attachments are more common in higher-quality locations. People may be interested in visiting a specific location that they believe is the best location for their favourite and leisure activities (Ryan, 2006). When people visit a location on a regular basis, they may develop a stronger sense of 'place dependence.' When a location is revisited on a regular basis, the appreciation of the location grows and there is a stronger attachment to the location (Kyle, 2004).

In this study, the term "place" refers to a tourism area, specifically a homestay programme that can attract members of the local community to the area. There are a few settings in homestay villages that can draw rural youth in and make them feel at home. Rice fields, rivers and water canals, open space, fields, and a community hall are among the settings. When youth return to a location for leisure activities on a regular basis, their attachment to that location grows. Attachment to a location inspires others, including tourists, to visit the location.

Emotion bridges the gap between people and their surroundings (Russel et.al., 1998). According to Morgan's (2009) previous research, emotional attachment detects some patterns in emotional response. Adults who recall a childhood location can express their memories and emotional connection. Adult remembrance of childhood place can express their memories and emotional connection including feelings of affection, sadness, pleasure security, and identity (Morgan, 2009). Memories that are fixed in childhood could also be valuable memories that they are going to remember in their future (Manzo, 2003). Places with tragedies also will remain in their minds. Additionally, emotional factor is vital in creating a way of place because it concerns with the history, cultural heritage, cultural lifestyle and there is a story behind these activities. It is not a landscape that we will see, but it's how of seeing and explaining it with our minds and assigning values to the landscape for intangible and spiritual reasons (Taylor, 2007).

Social interaction may be a social exchange between two or more individuals. This study focuses on social interactions between rural youth and tourists and rural youth and outsiders in homestay programme. Place attachments vary in their degree of emphasis on the social features of an area. Places often include people, who influence the meaning, experiences, and activities inherent during a place. For instance, when people attached to an area where they often hang around with close friends, or to an area where relations live. Natural elements during a place contribute towards a greater neighbourhood satisfaction (Kaplan, 2001). Active outdoor involvement by individuals and groups provides many benefits: a way of accomplishment, community development, and strengthened intergenerational ties (Westphal, 2003; Elmendorf, 2008; Draper and Freedman, 2010). As places gain more social significance, the interdependence between social and physical components is probably going to extend, binding groups to particular places (Thwaites, 2001).

Knowledge is vital and will be understood by future generations. An understanding of the normal knowledge is important for people especially youth to work out the way to use it. From the knowledge, people will understand and observe use of the knowledge. Knowing what the normal knowledge contains, it will encourage people to remember of added values of the knowledge. Nowadays, rural youth do not have skill to use the knowledge and the way to urge the knowledge from their parents or elderly in their villages. this data is usually transmitted from father to son or mother to daughter. In virtually all of those systems, knowledge is transmitted directly from a private to a different individual. It is recognised that local people possess a wealth of data about the local natural environment and ecological processes.

Methodology

The study was carried out in three Kedah homestays: Homestay Kg. Jeruju, Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing, and Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai. The homestays chosen represent the natural settings of Malaysian paddy fields. Second, the homestays are spread across three districts in Kedah: Kubang Pasu, Padang Terap, and Kota Setar. Third, the age distribution of the population in the homestays varies, as do the social interactions. This study employed observation and semi-structured interviews with Homestay operators in each village.

Results and Discussion

The findings were discussed in terms of the use of rice fields by rural youth activities and the involvement of youth in the activities. Table 1.0 shows a list of youth activities in three homestays (Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing, Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai, and Homestay Kg. Jeruju). There are two main activities which are activities within nature-based environment setting and activities within man-made setting. The nature-based environment setting includes rice field, water canal and river. There are 13 activities within nature-based setting. The activities include 1) Agriculture as source of income (3 activities), 2) Games (3 activities), 3) Recreational and leisure activities (3 activities) and 4) Fishing as side income (3 activities). Activities within man-made setting include mini hall, field and open space. There are 11 activities within man-made setting. The activities are games (4 activities), leisure activities (3 activities) and 5) Organising special events (4 activities). The data show a small difference in the number of activities performed at the three homestays such as catching ducks in the rice field, playing *petanque*, aerobic, practicing *silat*, playing futsal and catching fish using hands (*gogoh*).

Table 1.0

The lists of youth's activities in three homestays

Themes	Settings	Activities	
Activities within nature-based environment setting	1. Rice field	1. Agriculture as a source of income	1. Planting paddy 2. Harvesting paddy 3. 'Meracun'
		2. Games	4. Playing kites on rice field 5. Playing football on rice field 6. Catching duck in rice field 7. Playing sepak raga
		3. Recreational and leisure activities	8. Relaxing near paddy field 9. Riding motorcycle along paddy field 10. Cycling along paddy field
	2. Water canal and river	4. Fishing as side income and leisure	11. Catching fish 12. Catching fish using bubu, 13. Catching fish using hands,
Activities within manmade setting	3. Mini hall	5. Games	14. Playing badminton 15. Playing football 16. Playing petanque 17. Playing futsal
	4. Field		
	5. Open space	6. Leisure activities	18. Chatting at the restaurants/stalls 19. Aerobic

			20. Practicing silat
		7. Organising special events	21. Kites competition 22. Making dishes 23. Martial arts 24. Traditional dance

The data indicate a pattern regarding the activities performed in three homestays. Rural youth's activities in three homestays showed the same trends in the number of activities within nature-based environment setting and activities within manmade settings.

Table 2.0

The number of activities according to observation and semi-structured interview findings

Selected homestays	Number of activities according to observation and semi-structured interview findings		Total
	Activities within nature-based environment setting	Activities within manmade setting	
Kg. D'Belimbing	12	6	18*
Kg. Pantai Jamai	12	6	18*
Kg. Jeruju	8	4	12*
Total activities	32*	16*	48**

*The total is not the sum of activities because some of activities are overlapped.

**The total is not the sum of activities reported in homestay Kg. D'Belimbing, Kg. Pantai Jamai and Kg. Jeruju because some activities are overlapped.

Some of the activities overlapped in the three homestays. Examples of overlapping activities at the three homestays were harvesting paddy, planting paddy, *meracun*, playing badminton, playing football, catching fish, relaxing near the rice field, riding motorcycles in the rice field and cycling along the rice field.

The data of youth's activities within nature-based environment setting are shown in Table 3.0. Data revealed that the three homestays were practicing the rice field activities in homestay activities and their daily lives. The comparisons between activities in the homestays are shown in the Table 3.0. The results show that the three homestays have the same activities such as agriculture, recreational and leisure activities. Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing and Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai have similar activities including agriculture, games, recreational activities and fishing whereas Homestay Kg. Jeruju have fewer activities compared to Kg. D'Belimbing and Kg. Pantai Jamai because the youth are not playing games such as playing football in the rice field and catching ducks in the rice field. Moreover, youth in Kg. Jeruju are not catching fish using *bubu* and hands (*gogoh*).

Table 3.0

Types of activities among rural youth in homestays

Activities	Homestays		
	Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing	Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai	Homestay Kg. Jeruju
Agriculture as source of income			
1.Planting paddy	•	•	•
2.Harvesting paddy	•	•	•
3. Meracun	•	•	•
Games			
1.Playing kites in rice field	•	•	•
2.Playing football in rice field	•	•	
3. Catching duck on rice field	•	•	
Recreational and leisure activities			
1.Relaxing near rice field	•	•	•
2.Cycling along rice field	•	•	•
3.Riding motorcycle along rice field	•	•	•
Fishing as side income and leisure			
1.Catching fish	•	•	•
2.Catching fish using bubu	•	•	
3.Catching fish using hands	•	•	

From the data, the activities were categorised according to attachment to rice field setting. The activities were categorised into four main activities which are agriculture as source of income, games, recreational and leisure activities and fishing as side income and leisure. Data from Homestay Kg. Jeruju found that youth were less involved on rice field activities. Homestay operator in Homestay Kg. Jeruju revealed that elderly and immigrant workers planting and harvesting the paddy. This explained that rural youth 's attachment to rice field in Homestay Kg. Jeruju is lower than rural youth's attachment in Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing and Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai. The owner of rice field has to hire immigrant workers to work in rice field because of lack of men power. Harvesting is the process of collecting the mature rice crop from the field, according to the homestay operators. Reaping (cutting the mature panicles and straw above ground), threshing (separating the paddy grain from the remainder of the cut crop), cleaning (removing immature, unfilled, non-grain items), and transportation are all operations involved in rice harvesting (moving the cut crop to the threshing location). Nowadays, youth are not interested to get involved in rice field activities because youth do not know the process of planting the paddy. Youth are more interested to play games and less interested in outdoor activities in villages.

The data revealed that youth who have learned about the rice field activities from their parents are interested to get involved in rice field activities. Youth who were attached to the rice field activities are more interested to learn and practice the activities in their daily lives and as a source of income. Only a few of the youth are involved in rice field activities in their daily lives. In each homestay, the homestay operators explained that the average number of youth working as paddy farmers were only five to ten. A majority of the youth work in

government and private sectors in urban areas. In Homestay Kg. D' Belimbing, the homestay operator explained that the youth help their parents only on weekends and are involved in rice field activities when tourists come to their village.

Rural youth in the three homestays were involved in agriculture activities such as harvesting paddy, planting paddy and *meracun* but only three to five youths were involved in the activities. In Homestay Kg. Jeruju, youth were not interested to work as paddy farmers and not interested to help their parents do the rice field activities. Rural youth are playing games in rice fields in villages. Youth and children usually play games in the rice field in the evening between 4 p.m to 6 p.m. The activities include playing kites, playing football and catching ducks on the rice field. These activities are unique because they are playing on the rice field. Youth in different homestays have different attachment to rice field and rice field activities. Youth who have higher place attachment to a place will enjoy and be interested in the activities. From the data, kite-flying activity is an exciting activity that can attract locals and tourists to get involved in homestay activities. Youth who have basic knowledge on rice field activities have strong connection to a place. Youth in Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai and Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing have higher social connection compared to rural youths in Homestay Jeruju. Youth in Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai also have a special association to encourage this connection. Duck-catching activity was done and created by homestay operators for tourists. This activity is not an everyday activity in villages and some of the rural youth are not familiar with this activity. From the observation, rural youth in three homestay

The data indicated that rural youth in Homestay Kg. D' Belimbing and Kg. Pantai Jamai are more interested in traditional games in the rice field. In addition, the social connection in each homestay are different in which in Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai, the rural youth have a special association to encourage youth to get involved in homestay activities. On the other hand, in Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing and Kg Jeruju, there is no youth's association but the social connection between rural youth in homestay Kg. D'Belimbing is higher compared to rural youth in Homestay Kg. Jeruju. Moreover, in Homestay Kg. Jeruju, only a minority of youth participate in traditional games and only older adults and elderly were involved in kite-playing activity. They demonstrate how to make kites to the tourists and how to play kites.

The last activity is recreational and leisure activities. Cycling, riding motorcycles, and walking through rice fields are examples of recreational and leisure activities. These are typical rural youth activities in villages. The researcher discovered that youths and children enjoy relaxing near the rice field in the morning and evening. Children were having fun with their peers. Riding motorcycles and cycling through rice fields were also popular pastimes among village youths. In the evening, the majority of the youth were riding motorcycles through the rice fields with their friends, brothers and sisters. Aside from that, children and youths cycle through the rice fields in the evening to enjoy the scenery and play with their friends.

In three homestay villages, all three homestay operators said that morning walk is normally one of the homestay packages for tourists to relax and get fresh air in the rice field but youth and villagers also walk along the paddy field as a daily activity. Children also cycle along the rice field with their friends in the evening. The results showed similarities in that all youth in three homestay programmes are doing recreational and leisure activities in their daily lives. The study revealed that youth are willing to help the homestay operators to monitor the tourists in recreational and leisure activities in the villages.

Fishing is an important source of income and leisure among rural youth in villages. Catching fish using hand and catching fish using *bubu* can usually be done after raining. When the

researcher conducted the observation, it was in rainy season. There were a few of youth in Homestay Kg. D' Belimbing were catching fish using hand after raining. The youth were aged between 25-30 years old. They spend two hours to catch fish which is between 5 p.m to 7 p.m. They also used bubu to catch fish. They were excited when they managed to catch fish on the rice field. In Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai rural youth and women seem so excited to catch fish on the rice field after raining. They spend three hours to catch fish which is between 4 p.m to 7 p.m. Rural youth in Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai have strong connection with elderly and old women. The catching fish activity can motivate them to get close to each other. In contrast, rural youth in Homestay Kg. Jeruju were not interested to catch fish on rice field. From the observation, the researcher found that only elderly were catching fish on rice field. A few of children were helping their grandmother and grandfather to catch fish on rice field. They were so excited to do the activity. None of rural youth catching fish on the rice field.

From the homestay operator's explanations, rural youth in villages are helping each other to organise the activities for tourists. The youth were helping the homestay operators to find fish and bubu. According to JKKK in Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai, In Homestay Kg. Jeruju, youth have no interest to get involved in homestay activities in the village. Only a few of the youth were helping the committee to prepare and organise the activities for tourists. In contrast with rural youth in Homestay Kg. Jeruju, rural youth in Homestay Kg. Pantai Jamai have strong social interactions. Rural youth took part from the beginning of the activities. Youth have a few discussions and meetings before they organise an event. From the observation and semi-structured interview, the researcher found that fishing is an activity that is of interest among the youth and thus became a pulling factor to get youth involved in homestay activities. The involvement of youth in fishing activities were different between three homestays. Rural youth in Homestay Kg. D'Belimbing and Kg. Pantai Jamai were excited to explore the fishing activities while rural youth in Kg. Jeruju were not really interested to get involved in fishing activities

Conclusion

Place attachment concept is important to know how people perceived their environment and landscape in their daily lives. This study shows that there are two types of activities in paddy fields to support the homestay program. First, Activities within nature-based environment, and second, Activities within manmade settings. The two types of paddy field activities provide diverse attachments to youth to support the homestay program. These attachments can be categorized into four types of activities, namely Agriculture as a source of income, games, recreational and leisure activities, and Fishing, as side income and leisure. Based on these four categories, most of the youth in the village homestay environment have little interest in activities related to agriculture, and youth tend to have an attachment to the use of space for games, recreation, and fishing activities. This study would help to ensure the sustainability of culture and youth can learn the traditional activities in their daily lives. Although the study has brought attention between landscapes and human perceptions, it should be noted that further research with larger samples and different methods are recommended in order to explore strengthening findings.

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