



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN BUSINESS & SOCIAL SCIENCES



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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i5/17022>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v13-i5/17022

Received: 09 March 2023, **Revised:** 10 April 2023, **Accepted:** 22 April 2023

Published Online: 04 May 2023

In-Text Citation: (Hamid et al., 2023)

To Cite this Article: Hamid, Z. A., Anuar, N. A. M., & Ahmad, K. N. (2023). Social Capital and Social Media Antecedents' Influence on Sustainable Indigenous Tourism of the Mah Meri, in Carey Island, Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13(5), 305–316.

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Vol. 13, No. 5, 2023, Pg. 305 – 316

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www.hrmar.com

ISSN: 2222-6990

Social Capital and Social Media Antecedents' Influence on Sustainable Indigenous Tourism of the Mah Meri, in Carey Island, Malaysia

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Abstract

This paper presents the significant role of social capital and social media on sustainable indigenous tourism of the Mah Meri, in Carey Island, Malaysia. This study employs a quantitative approach that forms the use of social media in indigenous tourism development. This study also integrates social capital theory, especially bridging, bonding, and linking. The gap in Social Capital Theory is addressed in relation to social media utilization towards sustainable tourism. The quantitative approach is used in this study to gather and analyze data towards a regression model development. The result of the study gave significant contribution from both theoretical and practical perspectives. The antecedents of bridging, linking, and bonding, adaptation, participation, and sharing are found to be significant in predicting the sustainable indigenous tourism. It is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the existing literature on how social capital and social media can contribute towards sustainable practice of tourism by the indigenous communities.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Capital, Mah Meri, Sustainability, Tourism

Introduction

The presence of online information offers significant assistance in disseminating information. With the existence of social media, travelling to a destination becomes easier, quicker and provides a better experience than many years ago. The important point is that social media and internet tools usage that comes with online travel information increases significantly over the years (Hamid et al., 2017). By understanding online travel information as a structuring system in a world of high modernity, it becomes possible to understand the flow of social media and internet tools as well as tourists who are the important elements of tourism (Beedie, 2017). In this study, Carey Island is as one of the new tourist destinations in Selangor, Malaysia. To dig deeper into the program, we selected a village in Carey Island – Mah Meri Cultural Village (MMCV). Mah Meri Cultural Village was chosen because it has received preminent priority from the government as one of the tourism villages in Carey Island.

The sustainable tourism consists of social, economic, and environmental aspects as three pillars of sustainability. Kunasekaran et al (2017) stressed the power of these three pillars in the human life. The whole sustainability will be affected if any of the pillars become weak. The same was applied to indigenous tourism. In general, the 'activities in which indigenous people are directly involved either through control and/or by having their culture serve as the core of the attraction' is known as indigenous tourism (Hinch, 2004). The sustainability of indigenous tourism highly depends on culture, natural resources, and indigenous knowledges. In line with this, UNWTO (2019) also emphasized all tourism stakeholders in protecting and respecting the cultures of indigenous people, their rights, and their ancestral traditions. Similarly, past literature also highlighted the crucial roles of indigenous tradition culture and lifestyle as an attraction tool to continuously welcome both local and international tourists (Normah Latip et al., 2018). However, Idris (2018) discovered that the indigenous tourism which including culture, heritage and lifestyles doesn't get the deserving attention in past studies. The study by Zielinski et al (2020) further stressed the limited studies on indigenous communities in Malaysia. Thus, it justifies the need of the further study on indigenous tourism by highlighting their culture, resources, and knowledge level.

Furthermore, the development of the industry has become a resources of substantial foreign exchange revenues while enhancing socio-economic of local communities (Giap & Gopalan, 2016). In the development of tourism research, information and communication technology has continued to be a vital topic. The development of information and communication technology, which involves the usage of social media and internet tools, has brought awareness to millions of people. This has created new chances and choices for many people to communicate. In addition, the social media is widely used in tourism industry by marketers, destination managers and tourists themselves (Chua et al., 2021; Hysa et al., 2021). In line with Tourism Malaysia stressed the importance of social media in promoting the tourism destinations in Malaysia while providing 'Unforgettable Experiences in Malaysia' (Tourism Malaysia, 2019). Thus, many travel groups utilised the social media to share the tourism related information including local landmarks, food and beverage, accommodation, tour packages and tourism plan and so on (Zhen et al., 2022). However, it is still at infancy level for indigenous tourism. Similarly, there are gaps in contemporary literature on the use of social media among the local indigenous community. Moreover, analysing the uses and applications of information and communication technology (ICT) in the field of indigenous tourism has been relatively less researched by past studies (Lu et al., 2018). Xiang and Gretzel (2010) further pointed out 'the extent to which social media constitute the online tourism domain is not well understood in an objective, comprehensive way'. In addition, more social media studies are carried out from the perspective of the consumer than from the local community (Lu et al., 2018). Hence, it stressed the necessity of the further study on social media in relation to sustainable tourism.

The social capital play essential role in the development of human capital. It provides an appropriate foundation for human resources where they can accomplish their dedication by more participation, enhancing their professional knowledge and mutual understanding (Wang et al., 2016). The social capital which including institutions, relations, attitudes, values, and norms highly connected with sustainable development (Hamid et al., 2014). Hamid et al indicated (2021 indicated the social capital moderating the relationship between development of urban tourism and sustainable urban development. Furthermore, scholars revealed the average and strong relationship between social capital and sustainable indigenous tourism

dimensions. Although past studies explored the relationship between social capital and sustainable tourism, it not widely discovered in indigenous tourism. In line with thus, Bellato et al (2022) urged for further study on analysing the relationship between social capital and community-based tourism to provide insights in collective capacity and self-determination. Similarly, Moscardo et al (2017); Parmawati et al (2018) highlighted the limited study on social capital in the development of community-based tourism.

Therefore it underlined the need of the further study on social capital in indigenous tourism.

Furthermore, past literatures indicated that socio demographic indicators (including gender, age, income, and educational level) significantly influence the development and sustainability of tourism industry (Soliman et al., 2021; Shree and Neupane, 2021). Subsequently, Sidiropoulos et al (2019) revealed the stronger and significant moderating effects of gender, and education on sustainable tourism development. However, a study by Sinclair-Maragh (2017) showed women have high influences and benefits from the tourism industry compared to male. Comparatively, Jani (2018) provided more supports to male. The contradict findings urged further research to be executed to explore the moderating effects of socio demography on sustainable indigenous tourism. Thus, the main aim of this paper is to examine the influence of social capital and social media on sustainable indigenous tourism of the Mah Meri, in Carey Island, Malaysia.

Literature Review

The indigenous community in Malaysia represents around 12% of the Malaysian population, and most of them reside in East Malaysia while the remaining are residing in Peninsula Malaysia (Isa et al., 2016). The indigenous community in Peninsula Malaysia are relatively small, representing only 0.5% (178,000) of the entire population of Malaysia (Department of Orang Asli Development, 2019). They can be categorized into three groups (Abdullah et al., 2015), namely 1) Semang (Negrito), 2) Senoi and 3) Proto Malay (Aboriginal Malay). Each group has a different language, believes, living style, culture and ethnic (Isa et al., 2016, Abdullah et al., 2015). The geographical location also differentiates the indigenous people. For instance, those who reside near the coastal area are fisherman while those reside away from coastal area are mainly farmer.

Indigenous communities have rich culture and arts especially their wood carving (Roddin et al., 2015). In general, indigenous communities are poor (Roddin et al., 2012, 2015) and it is one of the biggest challenges for the government to assist them. The root of the poor is because of the engagement of indigenous communities in traditional agricultural activities and highly dependent on natural resources (Roddin et al., 2015). Many indigenous people receive assistance from the Malaysian government to improve their socio-economic conditions. For example, through Regroupment Schemes, some indigenous people have been resettled from rural to urban areas or to nearby settlement (Abdullah et al., 2015). Most of the resettlement was near the forest as most indigenous people depend on the forest as their livelihood. However, the efforts by the government create mix results as some indigenous people face some challenges to stay in a new environment.

Social Capital

Social capital typically refers to resources that exist in social relationships and networks (Li, 2015). Therefore, social capital is still a buzz word. Hwang (2012) pointed out that, unlike

human capital (which focuses on skills and knowledge), social capital is considered an individual investment that enhances interpersonal relationships to achieve personal goals. He further added that this relationship should tie with the cognitive recognition associated with the ego of the existence of resources. Likewise, Lin (2001) asserted that social capital also related to an individual's ability to access the resources embedded in the social relationship to achieve an individual's goal compared to a collective goal. He further added that social norms, strong trust, social networks, and individuals' willingness to attain the resources as essential components of social capital.

The evolution of social capital has been discussed by (Woolcock, 2001). Coleman (1988) distinguished three forms of social capital namely 1) obligations and expectations, 2) information channels, and 3) social norms. Social capital can be categorised into two namely cognitive social capital and structural social capital (Kawamoto & Kim, 2019). Cognitive social capital refers to 'shared norms, values, trust, attitudes, and beliefs' (Kawamoto & Kim, 2019). Putnam (2000) categorised social capital into two categories namely bridging and bonding. Conversely, some researchers (Aldrich, 2012) classified structural social capital into three forms: bonding, bridging, and linking. The following sub-sections explain the three forms of social capital.

Some tourism studies highlighted that social media brings significant implications to local people such as employment (Safko 2010; Xiang & Gretzel 2010; Hays et al., 2013). Today, information about hospitality companies is all day long (Bowen & Baloglu, 2015). From a business perspective, information technology and the use of social media change the ways business organisation do business (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Jacobsen & Munar, 2012). Social media provides a platform for tourism companies to interact with their clients to provide the best services (Hvass & Munar, 2012; Howison et al., 2015). It also offers a destination marketing organization (DMO) to reach global consumers with lower cost (Hays et al., 2012). On the other hands, social media is useful to assist tourists to cope with acculturation when travelling overseas (Li et al., 2019) and useful for event organizers to build enjoyment with attendees (Pino et al., 2019).

From a business perspective, tourism businesses utilise social media as a marketing tool to improve their business (Bowen & Baloglu, 2015; Gretzel et al., 2000; Hjalager, 2010; Roque & Raposo, 2016). This is because it is useful to provide a comparatively cost-effective and efficient means for business operators to promote their business and attract new customers while maintaining existing customers (Hays et al., 2013). Social media is not only widely used by business organizations to surge the profits by promoting their products and services (Safko, 2010) but also for the ease of communication with their customers (Cooper et al., 2017). Adding to this, effective social media marketing could help site manager to create an extended channel to engage tourists and to achieve desired outcomes to manage the sustainability of the sites (Cheng et al., 2016). Thus, it is useful to assist tourists to cope with acculturation when travelling overseas (Li et al., 2019).

Methodology

Thus, in this study, data was gathered using a quantitative approach. 202 survey questionnaires were completed at Mah Meri Cultural Village. Quantitative research design is a survey technique used in research

to measure specific characteristics through a structured questionnaire from many representative samples, so that the result can be generalized for the entire population (Fischer et al., 2014). As it is implemented in the present study, the researcher used structured questionnaire to analyse the relationship between community source, social capital, and social media on sustainable indigenous tourism. Further information about the population of the current study is discussed in the next part of this chapter. Furthermore, this study has adopted a deductive model which outlines the hypothesised relationships or consequences of the relationships. Multiple regression was done to develop a model that can explain the influence of community source, social capital, and social media on sustainable indigenous tourism of the Mah Meri, in Carey Island, Malaysia.

Findings and Discussions

Multiple regression analysis using stepwise method was employed to identify the predictors. A total of nine independent variables are analyzed to determine their influence on the dependent variable. The influence of three social capital dimensions (bridging, linking and bonding) and four social media dimensions (adaptation, participation, sharing, and interaction) are tested on the sustainable indigenous tourism dimension.

Table 1

Regression model summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the estimate
4	.603	.363	.337	.25195

According to the model summary as can be seen in table 1, from seven independent variables which were initially tested, six independent variables are predicted to have significant influence on the dependent variable. The R² value of 0.363 implies that the six independent variables explain about 36.3% of variance in the sustainable indigenous tourism attainment. The adjusted R² value for the predictors which is 0.337 derives small difference with the obtained R². The final model (model 4) was selected because this model includes all predictors that make a significant influence in predicting the dependent variable. The six independent variables are bridging, linking, and bonding, adaptation, participation and sharing. This finding is supported by the finding of Atkisson et al. (2001), which mentioned that the combination of community resources and participation are the biggest contributors of tourism sustainability, and the failure of many tourism programs can be seen because of lack of these attributes.

Table 2

Anova

Model 6	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5.283	6	.880	13.870	.000 ^f
Residual	9.268	146	.063		
Total	14.551	152			

The Anova Table 2 shows the significance of the selected sixth model which includes six variables. All the selected six variables in the regression model are significantly related to the criterion variable Y, F = 13.870) with the sig. p value <.05.

Table 3

Multiple Regressions Analysis between Independent Variables and the Sustainable Indigenous Tourism

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized Coefficients		
Coefficients	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
6 (Constant)	3.536	.416		8.509	.000
Bridging	.134	.060	.159	2.236	.027
Linking	-.246	.067	.342	-3.649	.000
Bonding	.130	.028	.387	4.673	.000
Adoptation	-.211	.045	.422	-4.680	.000
Participation	.225	.057	.361	3.928	.000
Sharing	.180	.068	.191	2.639	.009

a. Dependent Variable: SusIndTour

As can be seen in Table 3, the estimates of the model coefficients for B-constant are 3.536 and B1 (.134), B2 (-.246), B3 (.130), B4 (-.211), B5 (.225) and B6 (.180) respectively for bridging, linking, and bonding, adaptation, participation and sharing. Thus, the regression equation that can be derived from the obtained scores;

$$Y = B^0 + B^1 + B^2 + B^3 + B^4 + B^5 + B^6$$

$$Y = 3.536 + .134 - .246 + .130 - .211 + .225 + .180$$

Where

Y = sustainable indigenous tourism

B0 = constant value

B1 = bridging

B2 = linking

B3 = bonding

B4 = adaptation

B5 = participation

B6 = sharing

This result against the findings of Watson et al (2011); Waylen et al (2010) who illustrated significant relationship between social capital, sustainability, and culture heritage of indigenous people. Similarly, Yongrui et al (2018) underlined that all dimensions of social capital (including bonding, linking, and bridging) significantly influences the community' commitment in tourism development. However, Suess et al (2018) stressed that imbalanced power and bonding can lead to negative perception and commitment towards tourism development.

This finding also supported by Cheng et al (2017); Hussain et al (2019); Parra et al (2011); Wang et al (2002) who indicated the positive and significant relationship between social media and sustainability of tourism destinations. Similarly, the studies Liu et al (2020), Chung and Khoo (2015); No and Kim (2015) revealed that social media plays an essential role in communicate, interact and influence the tourist's behaviour and tourism development. However, the study by Javed et al (2020) indicated social media as a source of tourism promotion illustrated non-significant relationship with prediction of tourists' behavioural intention and actual behaviour.

The findings of the multiple regressions show that six variables can be significant in predicting the sustainable indigenous tourism. The outcome shows that the community strongly believes that their voice in the planning and implementation should be equal or more than the outsiders. Hinch and Butler (1996) mentioned that the most desired state of indigenous people involved in tourism is 'culture controlled' state where the indigenous people control their own business while indigenous theme is present. The same argument was raised by Arnstein (1969) by saying the highest level of participation can be achieved if the community genuinely participate in any developmental programs.

Conclusion

The empirical analysis of the direct effects towards sustainable indigenous tourism are the main theoretical contributions on the research, especially to tourism literature. The study is expected to provide guidance in terms of managerial perspective and propose fundamental improvements to the tourism industry, especially community-based tourism. Malaysian government, Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC), tourism authorities, Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA), and policy makers can get some insights on how to enhance and sustain the community-based tourism. Although past studies illustrated significant relationship between bonding, linking, bridging and sustainability, the finding of the study provided new insight to the tourism authorities by highlighting non-significant relationship between these constructs. Therefore, they can't fully depend on social capital to influence the sustainability of the community-based tourism.

In conclusion, the result of the study gave significant contribution from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Thus, it is appropriate for the Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture (MOTAC), JAKOA and tourism authorities to understand and formulate policies as well as strategies based on these constructs to improve and boost the community-based tourism.

Acknowledgement

This research was funded by Universiti Teknologi MARA Puncak Alam Campus, Selangor Branch under the DUCS Grant 3.0

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