

**WORK
TRANSFORMATION FROM
FISHERMAN TO
HOMESTAY TOURISM
ENTREPRENEUR: A
STUDY IN MANTANANI
ISLAND KOTA BELUD,
SABAH, EAST MALAYSIA**

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ABSTRACT

Most of the residents in Mantanani Island are from the Bajau Ubian ethnic group, where they work as a fisherman in the coast. The total population of this group here is 800 people. However, the future of the community and its fishing activities, which were bright once, is now presently unhappy due to illegal practices like fish-bombing that has caused serious depletion of the coral reefs, aquatic life and marine resources around the Mantanani Island.

The current situation is creating a worse phenomenon, where the fisherman can only catch a small quantity of fish and fish resources not as much as before. In addition, deep sea fishing activities have caused a decrease in fish caught by local fisherman of Mantanani Island. As a result, the monthly income falls below the poverty line in that area. The Mantanani Island community needs a transformation for survival and a variety of alternative employment and economic activities to sustain their livelihood such as homestay entrepreneurship. This is because Mantanani Island has beautiful natural scenery and nowadays has become a primary international tourists' top destination, particularly for those who are from the regions such as Europe, Japan, Korea, China, Australia and United States. The survey method, a quantitative research approach was used in this study besides other methods such as field observation and secondary data. The findings indicated that the Mantanani Island community is interested to accept social transformation but they still need support from the government, private sectors and NGO's to successfully overcome obstacles and limitations.

Keywords: fisherman community, work transformation, Mantanani Island, Homestay tourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

Fishermen communities especially in developing countries or third world countries are often being marginalised due to lack of development in infrastructure and low level of socioeconomic status (Ibrahim, 2007: 58). This phenomenon leads to conflict and unhappiness among the communities because they are unable to adapt themselves in development ideas, which are largely introduced by the development agencies such as the government and private sectors (Hussin and Weirowski, 2013). This situation has a close relationship with the underdevelopment, where their residential geography is far from the mainland and this has disabled them to get engaged in the development programmes.

Poverty issue among the poor fishermen communities in rural areas is a common thing and has always being studied by many researchers (Firth, 1966; Shaari, 1990). To overcome the fishermen's poverty problems such as sub-standard living conditions, low level of education and poor access to service like schools, healthcare and infrastructures, such as roads or markets (Solaymani and Kari, 2014: 165). Therefore, enhancing monthly income among the fishermen's communities needs to be given as the main priority (Lawson, et al. 2012). Realising

this mission, transformation in terms of their employment should be given serious attention. Traditionally, most of the island fishermen communities in developing countries such as Malaysia, specifically Sabah, consist of the small fishermen community in the coastal areas. Yet, employment field like fishing has become irrelevant by other economic development sectors such as tourism and urbanisation (Saat, 2008) as marine resources are getting less and most of the fishermen from the coastal areas especially the young generation move to other economic activities including construction workers, tourism resort workers, small traders, services and hospitality (Sa'at, 2011: 114). As a result, fishing activity no longer becomes primer jobs, but just a secondary employment for the new generation in the rural areas (Hussin & Weirowski, 2013).

Fishermen communities which are located on isolated islands like Mantanani Island, Kota Belud, Sabah are slowly facing the same problem. The practical use of traditional technologies for fish catching is not environmental friendly because the main method is 'fish bombing'. This method brings pollution and disaster to the marine lives and environment of the island. This situation brings many problems such as pollution, extinction of fish resources and worsening depletion of community

life. Fishermen in Mantanani Island depend on fish resources around the island as their income and livelihood. When these livelihood problems arise, they bring impact on the daily life of the island communities., therefore serious actions should be taken by the stakeholders. For instance, the fishermen in Mantanani Island have taken proactive actions such as seeking other alternatives economic activities in their area. One of the alternatives activities involved by the villagers is to become a homestay operator. The work transformation, in fact from fishermen to homestay operators is the villagers own initiative and awareness. Homestay programme is an appropriate strategy to raise the level of villagers' monthly income and socioeconomic status. The government, moreover, has recognised homestay programme as one of the tourism products that can empower local community through tourism development in Malaysia (Mapjabil & Che Ismail, 2012).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, HOMESTAY PROGRAMME AND ENVIRONMENT

Early studies related the issue of development, poverty, and social change among the fishermen community in Malaysia were undertaken by scholars such as Firth (1966 & 1990), Aziz (1987) and

Shaari (1990). The first phase was done by Firth in 1939 until 1940. A study by Firth was published in 1966 focuses on the level of productivity, marketing and distribution among the Malay fishermen community in Perupok, Bachok, Kelantan, which has a significant relationship with the community values. Furthermore, the fishermen in Bachok have a low level socio-economic status because they are still practising the conservative values, lack of capital, and poor fish catching technology. Firth has done second phase research in the same location in 1960s. The findings revealed that the socio-economic status and mobility among the fishing communities in the research area increased but this increment is very little and slow, as the poverty issue is still dominant in the area.

Scholars like Aziz (1987) focus on poverty involving fishermen in the coastal areas of Berserah, Pahang in the year 1950s. The findings indicated that the fishermen in Berserah did not have sufficient capital and they commonly used traditional fish catching equipment such as small boat and *pukat*. This situation became deteriorate when the middleman who owned the financial capital and fishing boat forced the fishermen to pay higher rent and debt. This situation led to the chaos relationship between fishermen

and middlemen, which the advancement of the source of income is supposed to be received by the fishermen.

A study on poverty and underdevelopment issues involving fishermen was carried out continuously by Shaari in 1978 until 1980 in Perupok, Kelantan. His research findings also revealed that most of the fishermen in the study's site are still living under the poverty line. Meanwhile in Sabah, a few studies regarding poverty and development among the fishing community were conducted by Getrude (2003), Ismail (2004) and Ali (2011). According to Getrude (2003), the fishermen community diversify their employment by involving in seaweed cultivation. Also, there is significant relationship between changes in attitude and community education level in Omodal Island of Semporna, Sabah. The higher level of education possess by the fishermen, the higher understanding and participating by the fishermen in the seaweed cultivation activities. A study by Ismail (2004) also showed that the main reason why seaweed cultivation in Banggi Island, Kudat failed is because it is related to the attitudes of the fishing communities where they largely depend on government's assistance and subsidies. Lack of information, insufficient equipment, poor technology, 'ais-ais'

diseases, and threat of marine aquatic threat by fish and turtle, have turned the seaweed project into failure and the community remains living under the hard core poverty line. Lastly, a research by Ali (2011) indicates that the same trend occurred in the District of Semporna, where the seaweed cultivators are still living as a poor community, though they have been involved in multiple jobs activities such as fishermen and seaweed cultivators.

Moreover, Ibrahim (2008) focuses on the impact of alternative economic activities in tourism sector by fishermen in Redang Island, Terengganu. The research findings revealed that there are positive impacts of tourism activities gained by the local community in Redang Island. For example, tourism sector in Redang Island has provided new jobs opportunities in resorts and this sector has increased the level of community towards conservation of the environment and marine life in Redang Island. The development of tourism sector on the island however, has also resulted negative impact on island communities such as marginalising the locals from real benefits of the development. This happens because the involvement of the private tourist resorts seeks for maximum profits without giving serious attention to the livelihood of the

local communities. This situation makes the local community being an audience rather than active participants in the tourism development.

In terms of the homestay programme, many scholars have agreed that homestay programme could benefit the community members in their daily lives such as job opportunities (Hamzah, 2007; Hussin, 2008; Kayat & Mohd. Nor, 2006; Hatton, 1999; Ibrahim & Razzaq, 2009; Din, 1993 & 1995; Hussin & Kunjuran, 2014) and provide side income (Mapjabil & Che Ismail, 2005). Active participation by the community in the homestay programme would benefit them by increasing their livelihoods. Nowadays, the homestay programme has transformed into a form of business and has produced many entrepreneurs in the country. This was proven by the statistical data provided by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC) indicating that the number of homestay programmes has increased drastically to 231 in 2011 as compared to 78 homestay accommodations in 2005 (Kayat, 2007). In homestay programme, there are many products offered by the host especially the handicrafts (Hatton, 1999; Hussin, 2008; Pakshir & Nair, 2011). In this regard, the community get an opportunity to gain economic benefits, when they actively participate in this

programme and get the chance to establish the handicraft industry in their respective areas. Moreover, the homestay programme should be implemented as a community programme and good plans are required in order to develop it in such a way so that profits can be gained and the resources can be used in the best way (Kayat, Mohd Nor, & Mad Idris, 2004).

3. DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The study focuses on the Mantanani Island, situated 30 km from the town of Kota Belud, Sabah. The island is located in the west sea of Sabah, in South China Sea, consisting of Big Mantanani Island, which is resided by the local community and Small Mantanani Island occupied by the forests and *Linggisan* (Refer map 1). Generally, the total population in Big Mantanani Island is 800 people. Majority of the residents in Mantanani Island belong to Bajau Ubian ethnic group. Moreover, the major economic activities performed by inhabitants are fishing and involving in tourism trade such as manpower in tourism resorts. For instance, the activities are the main sources of employment and income generation, and therefore help to sustain livelihood of local communities in Mantanani Island. However, there are a number of problems faced by the residents such as poverty and lack of infrastructure

facilities, mainly the clean water service because the island's location is quite isolated.

Mantanani Island was selected due to various reasons with its own potentials existing in the settlement, with local community participation in tourism activities directly providing benefits to them such as job opportunities mainly in tourism resorts. For instance, some of the residents worked as a tourist guide, room cleaner, and boat guide. Mantanani Island also is along the coastal area, which is surrounded by very attractive marine biodiversity especially coral reefs. However, the drastic development of the tourism in the area brings environmental pollution like huge amount of rubbish disposal and uncontrolled littering of plastic bottles. Furthermore, the fishing method involving 'fish bombing' practised by the community in the island leads to the depletion of coral reefs and marine lives. These negative impacts have turned to be a warning and calls for conservation initiative toward the environment in the island itself.

The study applied several methods to gain data for this study such as household survey questionnaire, field observation and secondary data through relevant documents. Simple random sampling was used to explore the case

involving survey questionnaires with 180 respondents. This type of sampling ensures that any individual element of the population to have equal and independent opportunities of being selected and also minimising sampling biases (Sekaran, 1992). The study was conducted on 11th to 17th February 2013 in two villages in Mantanani Island namely Padang Village and Siring Bukit Village. At the field site, a group of researchers at the Ethnography and Development Research Unit, Universiti Malaysia Sabah carried out face-to-face interviews through a structured questionnaire with household heads or their representatives, and the representatives were volunteered by the households themselves. All interviews were conducted in Malay language and the duration varied from around one to two hours. Other than that, the field observation involved systematic selection, watching and recording the behaviours and characteristics of tourism operations and environmental pollution. Some aspects were examined like expression, behaviour of the respondents during the questionnaire section, surrounding situation and phenomena. Likely, documentary reviews were done involving journals, books, web sites and these documented sources were employed to add value and enriching the primary data.

Finally, the data collected were analysed. The quantitative data types in the form of nominal and ordinal in nature were presented in numbers, percentages, frequencies and tables. Descriptive

statistics were presented and explained in order to achieve the objectives of the study and these were organised and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version 20.

Map 1: Map of Mantanani Island



Source: [HTTP://DIGDEEP1962.WORDPRESS.COM/2012](http://digdeep1962.wordpress.com/2012)

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The discussion in this section is divided into four parts: (1) respondents’ demographic and socio-economic, (2) respondents’ perception on ‘other

activities’, which pollutes the environment, (3) residents’ perception about the future of fishing activities, and (4) respondents’ perception on potential opportunities through tourism.

Table 1: Background of the respondents (N=180)

Information	f	%
Gender		
Male	110	61.1
Female	70	38.9
Education		
No school	20	11.1
Primary school	30	16.7
Secondary school	107	59.4
School of “pondok”	2	1.1
<i>Pusat Dakwah Islam</i>	1	0.6
College	6	3.3
Polytechnic	2	1.1
University	12	6.7
Age		
15-29 years	40	22.2
30-40 years	63	35.0
41-50 years	38	21.1
51-60 years	30	16.7
61 and above	9	5.0

Income		
>500	114	63
501-1000	51	28.3
1001-1500	5	2.8
1501-2500	1	0.6
3501-4600	1	0.6
4601 above	4	2.2
No answers	4	2.2
Origin		
Mantanani Island	109	60.6
Outside Mantanani Island	37	20.6
Mantanani Island and Outside	34	18.9

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Table 1 shows the summary of gender, age, income, place of origin, and level of education of respondents. The survey was carried out on 180 respondents involving

residents in the Mantanani Island and the survey had more males than females. One significant observation is that 60.6 per cent respondents were born on the island

4.1 Respondents’ participation in other activities that could pollute the environment

Table 2: Respondents participation in other activities

Activities	Yes	No	Total
Collecting abalones	12	168	180
Collecting prawns	7	173	180
Collecting sea cucumber	19	161	180
Collecting mussels	18	162	180
Collecting turtle eggs	13	167	180
Collecting turtle skin	7	173	180
Collecting bird nests	24	156	180
Making salt fish	76	104	180
Total			100 %

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

The discussion in this section covers the responses of the community that is involved in other activities that could be polluted the environment around the island. Based on Table 2, there are 8 other activities engaged by the community on the island. The majority of the respondents

(76) involved were producing salt fish, caught through the method by ‘fish bombing’. The findings also revealed that, there were respondents who were involved in collecting bird nests (24 respondents) and collecting sea cucumber (19 respondents) respectively.

The findings also revealed that fish bombing activities bring negative impacts to the environment. Table 2 shows that 76 respondents involved in making salt fish were actually reflected in the fish bombing activities, still practised by some of the

fishermen on the island. The other activities such as collecting abalones, collecting prawns, sea cucumbers, mussels were perceived by the respondents did not bring negative impacts to the environment.

4.2 Respondents' perception about the future of fishing activity

Table 3: Residents' perception about the future of fishing activity

Future of fishing activities	f	%
Number of fishermen would increase, price increases, fish catching increases	9	5.0
Number of fishermen would increase, price increases, fish catching decreases	63	35.0
Number of fishermen would decreases, price decreases, fishing catching decreases	28	15.6
Number of fishermen would increases, price would not change, very little fish catching	5	2.8
Number of fishermen would increases, price and fishing catching based on seasons	31	17.2
Number of fishermen would decreases, price increases, very little fish catching	10	5.6
Number of fishermen would decreases, price would not change, very little fish catching	5	2.8
No changes	4	2.2
Not sure	10	5.6
Not relevant	15	8.3
Total	180	100%

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Table 3 shows the perceptions of the residents regarding the future of the fishing activity in their area. They provided many perceptions regarding the future of the fishing activity on the island. A total of 63 respondents (35.0 %) perceived that the amount of fishermen in their island would

increase due to the high price of fish, yet the amount of fish was expected to decrease. Moreover, 17.2 percent of the respondents perceived that there would be an increasing number of fishermen even though the price and fishing activity were based on the seasons. Clearly, the majority

of the respondents perceived that the number of fishermen would increase even

though the fishing product is always underestimated.

4.3 The potential of homestay tourism as an alternative livelihood to the Mantanani Island communities

This section discusses the potential of the homestay programme as alternative livelihood economic activities on Mantanani Island. This section also

explains about the possible factors that influence and limit the respondents to participate in this programme.

Table 4: Respondents' have been heard about the homestay programme

Have heard about homestay programme	Respondents' interest to participate				Total
	interested	Not interested	Do not know	No answer	
Heard	86	35	-	2	123
No heard	9	42	1	2	54
No answer	1	2	-	-	3
Total	96	79	1	4	180

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Based on Table 4, the findings revealed that 123 respondents heard about the homestay programme in their area. From the total of 123, majority of the respondents (86) were interested to participate in the homestay programme. For instance, they perceived that the reason why they wanted to take part in the homestay programme was to enhance their livelihood and boost their family monthly income (43.3 %). A total of 42 respondents had not heard of this homestay programme before and did not want to take part in it. This was due as some of these respondents were not ready to participate in homestay

programme with having lack of financial capital and basic housing facilities.

Other than that, Table 5 shows that the main factors that influenced respondent participation in the homestay programme was due to the increase in income and the standard of living of the community (43.3 %). Moreover, the main factors that limited the respondents' participation in the homestay programme were of less cross-cultural understandings (13.9 %), less financial capital (11.7%), followed by being busy and not interested (10%). As a result, the findings reveal that the majority of the respondents perceived positively

towards the establishment of the homestay programme and the homestay programme has the potential to be promoted as alternative livelihood economic activities on the Mantanani Island.

Table 5: Influence and limitation factors of respondents to participate in homestay programme

Factors	f	%
Influence factors of respondents participation		
Increase the income and standard of living	78	43.3
Increase the income and gain experience	3	1.7
Increase the income and introduce the culture of the local community	2	1.1
Limitation factors of respondents participation		
Busy and not interested	18	10.0
Less cross cultural understandings	25	13.9
Less financial capital	21	11.7
Language barriers	3	1.7
Do not having knowledge	10	5.6
No answer	20	11.1
Total	180	100.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

Table 6 shows that there are eight issues raised by the respondents for the homestay management process if they are involved in this programme. They are:

- i. *Types of visitors* who stayed in the homestay became the main issue to be considered by the respondents. The findings revealed that, 62.2% of the respondents expected that the homestay
- ii. *Home facilities*. The findings shows 45.6% of the respondents agreed they

management should take into consideration the types of visitors that are allowed to visit the homestay. This is because majority of the respondents preferred for clear guidelines produced by the homestay committee regarding the dos and don'ts of visitor's norms and behaviour during their stay in the homestay as majority of the Mantanani residents are Muslims.

should ready with home facilities before implement homestay programme. They

believed that if the homestay programme is implemented, their homes need to be renovated even with higher cost.

iii. *Homestay training*. In terms of skill training to the members of the families, 25.6% of the respondents agreed to this initiative. This is because they believed that they needed this training in order to provide quality services to the visitors who arrive in their village.

iv. *Homestay training by the government agencies*. The findings indicate that 27.8% of the respondents agreed that the training programmes should be provided by the related government agencies. Among the training programmes suggested by the community are producing handicrafts, housekeeping, book keeping, and cooking.

Table 6: Respondents' opinions regarding homestay management process

Respondents' opinions	Need	No need	No answer	Do not know	No relevant	Total
Types of visitors	112 (62.2%)	9 (5.0%)	10 (5.6%)	19 (10.6%)	30 (16.7%)	180 (100.0%)
Home facilities	82 (45.6%)	1 (0.6%)	21 (11.7%)	73 (40.6%)	3 (1.7%)	180 (100.0%)
Home services	56 (31.1%)	58 (32.2%)	25 (13.9%)	38 (21.1%)	3 (1.7%)	180 (100.0%)
Homestay training for family members	46 (25.6%)	2 (1.1%)	96 (53.3%)	33 (18.3%)	3 (1.7%)	180 (100.0%)
Homestay training by government agencies	50 (27.8%)	-	93 (51.7%)	32 (17.8%)	5 (2.8%)	180 (100.0%)
Guidelines and monitoring by government agencies	48 (26.7%)	1 (0.6%)	94 (52.2%)	33 (18.3%)	4 (2.2%)	180 (100.0%)
Transport facilities to island	48 (26.7%)	67 (37.2%)	30 (16.7%)	31 (17.2%)	4 (2.2%)	180 (100.0%)
Catering for food and beverages	51 (28.3%)	63 (35.0%)	30 (16.7%)	32 (17.8%)	4 (2.2%)	180 (100.0%)

Source: Fieldwork, 2013

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study show that the survivals of the fishermen of Mantanani Island are still dependent, specifically on fish and marine resources. However, the source of fish slowly decreased because the increasing number of fishermen, fish bombing practises which caused the destruction of coral reefs and environment. Majority of the fishermen were aware of these problems, therefore they started to make transformation in their traditional jobs from being a fisherman to a homestay tourism entrepreneur for the sake of their future sustainable survival. However, the findings also revealed that there were many limitations that became barriers for fishermen and families to participate in the homestay programme because of they were busy and not interested. The respondents also had less

cross cultural understandings, less financial capital, and faced communication language barriers with the visitors who stayed at their house.

Thus, the findings indicate that there are rooms for improvement of these limitations by having strategic initiatives towards homestay programme development and environmental conservation. These are financial capital assistance, clean water supply, 24-hour electricity supply, systematic solid waste management practices, serious enforcement of fish bombing practises and providing homestay training programmes for the Mantanani communities by related government agencies and private sectors. Implementing alternative economic activities that could pro-environmental friendly and sustainable livelihood becomes a reality in the near future.

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