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Visitors Willingness to Pay for Conservation of Iban Longhouse Homestay

Catherine Pangkas1*, Thalany Kamri2
1. Faculty of Business and Management Universiti Teknologi Mara, Cawangan Sarawak Kampus Samarahan, catherinepangkas@gmail.com
2. Faculty of Business and Management Universiti Teknologi Mara, Cawangan Sarawak Kampus Samarahan, thalany@uitm.edu.my

*Corresponding Author

Abstract

A Iban Longhouse Homestay, serving as a cultural and heritage holiday destination, was used as the study site for this research. The data was collected from five different locations of selected established Iban Longhouse Homestay in Sarawak. A total of 300 local and foreign visitors were interviewed. The Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) was employed to estimate the value of conservation by eliciting visitors' willingness to pay. The result shows significant factors for Willingness to Pay (WTP) are origin, education, work, motivation, environment, and culture. The variable includes socio-demographic characteristics, motivations for visiting, and Iban longhouse attributes. This study also applied open-ended and estimation of mean and median Willingness to Pay (WTP) to meet the objectives. A total of 78.3% of respondents are willing to pay over RM20 for conservation to stay per night at Iban Longhouse Homestay. The result shows mean conservation fees for local visitors and foreign visitors are RM28.59 and RM44.89 respectively. This study revealed that using the total number of tourists visited selected Iban Longhouse Homestay in the year 2019, the estimated total conservation value of local and foreign visitors is RM136,076.59.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Natural and human resources have been utilized as a source of homestay programs to enlarge the development of the rural area (Devkota, 2008). This strategy is trusted to lead the tourism industry into growth as many developing countries sustainable practice this strategy such as Costa Rica, Thailand, and Nepal. According to Othman et al., (2013), the combination of human experience, culture, and natural resources increase the approval of the homestay program due to integration in every aspect of rural development. Homestay has an advantage conducting effective tool for the natural and cultural heritage country because of existing natural resources, cultural and heritage assets.

Iban Longhouse Homestay is part of rural tourism. Geographically, Iban Longhouse Homestay is located at a rural area which far from the city and lacks infrastructure including electric and water supply (Ngah, R., et al., 2022). Many authors have identified the impact of rural tourism on cultural conservation, economic growth, and sustainability (Blezentis et al., 2012; Chen, 2011; Liu et al., 2011; Sharpley & Vass, 2006). According to Beeton (1999:28) “a motivating factor for tourists to visit rural areas is to experience what is still thought of as the rural idyll”. Hernantes et al., (2007) specified that the principal motivation for people to travel to rural areas is the interaction with a rural way of life and nature.

The statistic reported that Homestay Malaysia has earned RM29, 662, 211.60 with a 7.3% increase of rate achievement in 2019 compared to the year 2018. Sarawak Homestay Program has contributed RM4,704,599.9 to tourism (Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture, 2020). Therefore, to enhance this market, it is significant to identify visitors' motivation to visit, particularly for Iban Longhouse Homestay in Sarawak.

Achievement of firms in tourism industry is greatly impacted by the tourism arrival and expenditure (Ab Kadir, 2018). However, despite the increasing number of tourists arriving, homestay hosts still need to learn visitors' motivation to visit otherwise they might face challenges to attract visitors to visit.

There is a concern raised that someday, the diverse identity of the longhouses might be vanished (Mahayuddin et al., 2017). The traditional longhouses are no longer a living space but are often being constructed for tourism purposes and being conserved as cultural artifacts (Beynon, 2013). According to Sim & Khan (2014), traditional materials are being substituted with modern elements. This modernization trend also influenced some of the sustainable traditional longhouses. Apart from that, the transformation and change of the economy caused some ancient cultures and arts to disappear in the past. This study, therefore, attempts to identify visitors' motivation to visit and to estimate the value of conservation by obtaining visitors' willingness to pay using the contingent valuation method. A study on the conservation of Iban Longhouse from other perspectives such as building, engineering, architecture, and culture was done before, but from the perspective of economic value from visitors' willingness to pay (WTP) is yet to be explored.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Iban Longhouse in Sarawak

Longhouse is recognized as "a village under one roof, with family apartments joined together and a long communal gallery" (Zeppel 1995). Longhouse structure is popular, especially among the Borneo native residents. The Iban longhouse consists of a few main parts. It is comprised of an open platform (tanju), the rooted gallery (ruai) with a sitting/sleeping area (pantar) and common walkway (tempuan), the family room (bilik), with kitchen area (dapur) inside, and a storage loft (sadau) (Kedit, 1990). The structure of Iban Longhouse is different from other Dayak ethnic longhouses due to geographically different from other ethnicities (Zeppel, 1994).

During marketing tourism development in Borneo, respective states, travel agencies, and communities promote longhouses as a marketing strategy. In Sarawak, the longhouse is most correlated with the Iban, Bidayuh, and Orang Ulu ethnic, which represent most natives in Sarawak. However, some of the ethnic groups have devalued the structure and decided for a single house or modernize the structure of the longhouse (Samani et al., 2016). According to Hon (1989), the starting point of longhouse tourism in Sarawak begins with trips by a foreigner to the Iban longhouse. It supported by Zeppel (1997) assured that the Iban longhouse pointed to the rural area of Skrang, Lemanak, Ulu Ai and Engkiri Rivers were the first spot visited by a foreigner. Afterward, until this moment, this area takes by the Ministry of Tourism Sarawak to market homestay programs in the longhouse villages.

Even though the government supports the construction of new longhouses, the concept of the longhouses is being modernized. As stated by Victoria, J., et al., (2017), a sustainable and friendly environment of traditional materials is being substituted with modern materials. This caused some of the surviving traditional longhouses are also being affected by modern influences. The Iban goes through some changes for past decades when they start to upgrade the following modernity. The majority of Iban in Sarawak has converted to other beliefs and religions such as Christianity (Chelum et al., 2018). This is one of the elements that influence the changes in traditional longhouses construction. Besides the concern of cultural heritage conservation, the environmental integration in the design of traditional longhouses did not represent the culture of Iban.

2.2 Contingent Valuation Method (CVM)

The contingent valuation method is a suitable method to estimate the amount that visitors are willing to pay for the conservation of Iban Longhouse Homestay. In the past, the Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) was also applied to estimate non-market economic value such as national parks, culture, and heritage. Conservation contributes economic benefits through the value of a diversity of the market and non-market estimation methods. Finding of most studies discovers that non-market benefits are the key element of economic value (Lockwood et al., 1993: Kamri, T et al 2020).

In economics definition, willingness to pay (WTP) was defined as the base aggregate of cash that a person will recognize to exit or to hold on to something negative. Pearce and Turner (1990) specified that the willingness to pay (WTP) is an instrument was used to measure the direct economic use of nature. In the previous literature review, the willingness to pay (WTP) method has been used to estimate the value of non-market goods (Reynisdottir et al., 2008), and various experiences of willingness to pay (WTP) have been recognized. According to Bhandari & Heshmati (2010), there are some socio-demographic and other variables discovered

to be significant factors of willingness to pay (WTP) such as visitor satisfaction, the past payment history, attitudes on the environment, and period of visitation. Among the demographic variables, age is an important determinant of the holiday behaviour of a tourist and their choice of tourist spots (Alim, M.A et.al 2021; Cottrell, 2003; Weaver et al., 1994).

3.0 METHODOLOGY

To accomplish the objectives of this study, attributes were generated to portray Iban Longhouse Homestay as the study site. The attributes were discussed using interviews and distributed questionnaires. This interview was involving the stakeholders of this study. The stakeholders were selected based on their areas of expertise. Data collection was collected within four months between March until July 2019. The sampling used for this study is convenience sampling. Convenience sampling, as one of the non-probability sampling techniques, was used to get the samples. In the research design, data collection has been collected for primary data. A total of 300 questionnaires has been distributed to local and foreign visitors staying at Rumah Bawang Assan (Sibu), Rumah Nyuka (Sarikei), Rumah Benjamin Angki (Kanowit), Rumah Wilson Bana (Sri Aman), and Rumah Margretta (Julau). The survey was conducted face to face. It is to ensure the data was collected accurately.

The questionnaire was comprised of two parts, which are part 1 and part 2. Part 1 contains the introduction of the study, such as a research overview, research objectives, and identifications of the author. Part 2 contains the questions of the survey. It will be divided into three sections; Section A, B, C. Section A of the questionnaire includes the respondents' information on their socio-demographic characteristics and their motivation to visit. Question 1 has a set of 6 questions regarding their background information. Question 2 regarding respondents' motivation to visit consists of 12 statements that are reflecting their reason to visit. These statements are generated according to past studies by Kao et al., (2008) and Ngamsom (2007). The questions are using a 1 to 5 Likert scale format ranging from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly Agree."

Section B consist of question 3. The respondent would be asked to level how important the set of 25 attributes would be in their decision to visit Iban Longhouse Homestay. To level these attributes, another 5 Likert scales begin with "Not at all important" to "Very important". Longhouse attribute items were adopted from previous designs of Beerli & Martin (2004).

In Section C consist of questions 4 and 5, respondents would be asked on CVM. This section uses a case study as a guideline to answer the question. They are required to answer whether they are willing to pay a given amount. If their answer is no, they will require to state their minimum amount of conservation fee. If yes, they will be required to state how much more they are willing to pay for conservation fees. They are also required to give their maximum amount of conservation fee per night in Iban Longhouse Homestay. The question will explain to the respondents.

4.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio-demographic profile of respondents

In this survey, respondents' demographic had been asked in section A which included gender, age, origin, education, work, and income. Table 1 below shows a summary of the respondent's profile.

Table 1 indicated the overall result on the socio-demographic profile of respondents. The total number of respondents was 300. Based on table 4.1, out of 300 respondents, 57% of them are female and 43% of them are female. All the respondents' ages were between 14 to 79 years old. A majority (58.7%) of the respondents are in the 20-39 years of age group. Only 18.7% is below 20 years old and 15.7% is over 50 years old. This finding shows the mean age is at 32 years of age. Based on the table, out of 300 respondents, 84.3% are local visitors and 15.7% are foreign visitors.

This survey also found that more than half of the respondents (69%) is highly educated with at least possessed undergraduate degree education. Based on occupation classification, 42.3% are classified as currently employed, 12% seeking employment, 12.3% are retired. A total of 33.3% is under the classification of others. Most of the respondent is classified as an underemployed category. The highest category of income per month is in the range of less than RM3000 with 21.3%. This is followed by RM3000 to RM6000 (20%), RM6001 to RM9000 (2.7%) and above RM9000 (0.7%). This survey reveals that the mean income per month is estimated at RM1437.63.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristic of Respondents

Variable	Freq	Percent (%)	Mean	Std. Dev
Gender			1.57	0.496
Male	129	43		
Female	171	57		
Age			32.17	15.315
<20	56	18.7		
20-29	108	36		
30-39	68	22.7		
40-49	22	7		
50-59	18	6		
>60	28	9.7		
Origin			1.16	0.364
Malaysia	253	84.3		
Foreign	47	15.7		
Education			15.18	3.284
Secondary School	93	31		
Undergraduate Degree	163	54.3		
Postgraduate Degree	44	14.7		
Work				
Employed	127	42.3	2.37	1.323
Seeking employment	36	12		
Retired	37	12.3		
Others	100	33.3		
Income			1437.6	1993.21
<3000	64	21.3		
3000-6000	60	20		
6001-9000	8	2.7		
>9000	2	0.7		

4.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis

As a result, one factor was extracted with the eigenvalues of above 1.0 which are 7.318, and the total variance of 60.979 percent. All the items in these factors were found to have a high factor loading of more than 0.5. The factor loading is ranging from 0.678 to 0.838. The statement by Hair et al., (2010) stated that the coefficient of higher than 0.5 for the factor loading is used as a benchmark to specify an accurate loading for each item. The communalities can be justified as the amount of variation in the variable justified by the factors. In this study, the communalities were ranging from 0.600 to 0.703. The result suggested that one important category that motivation as one variable.

Table 2: Factor Analysis

Statement	Factor loading	Communalities
To learn new cultures/ways of life	.707	.500
To enjoy the beautiful scenery	.815	.664
To attend cultural events	.785	.616
Rest and relaxation	.789	.623
Good value for money	.768	.590
To escape the daily routine	.678	.460
To seek adventure and pleasure	.807	.651
To seek recreation and entertainment	.838	.703
To do exciting things	.835	.697
Intellectual improvement	.782	.611
To go to places that friends have not visited	.732	.536
Visiting a place I can share with others when get back home	.817	.667

Table 3:Regression

Variable	Coefficient	Std Error	t-statistic	Sig.
(Constant)	-21.295	9.245	-2.303	0.022
GEN	-	-	-	-
AGE	-	-	-	-
ORI	15.213	2.569	5.922***	0.000
EDU	0.860	0.296	2.907***	0.004
WOR	-1.912	0.724	-2.638***	0.009
INC	-	-	-	-
MOT	0.759	0.157	4.845***	0.000
ENV	-1.856	0.390	-4.787***	0.000
ACT	-	-	-	-
BLD	-	-	-	-
CUL	1.058	0.362	2.924***	0.004
SVC	-	-	-	-
R	0.544			
R^2	0.296			
Adjusted R^2	0.282			
F stats	20.531			

Significant at ***1%, **5% and *10%

4.3 Regression Model

The analysis of willingness to pay allows studying the goodness of conservation fee at Iban Longhouse Homestay. A simple linear regression was applied to analyse the Willingness to Pay for this study. The regression shows the list of independent variables to predict the dependent variable.

To answer the objective in this study, descriptive and multiple regression were performed. The dependable variable is the willingness to pay for conservation, which was answered by the respondents through an open-ended question survey. The independent variables were respondents' demographic, motivation factor, and Iban Longhouse Homestay attributes.

The table shows the results of the regression analysis. To predict the multiple regression model, the multiple correlation coefficient (R), coefficient of determination (R2), and F ratio were examined. First, the R of the independent variable on the dependent variable was 0.544, which showed that the visitors had a positive and high overall willingness to pay for conservation. Second, the R^2 was 0.296, suggesting that more than 20% of the variation of visitors' willingness to pay was explained by three factors. While the remaining 80% are explained by other factors. Last, the F ration, which explained whether the results of the regression model could have occurred by chance, had a value of 20.531 ($p = 0.000$) and was considered significant.

This also revealed that the variables that are significant for demographic factors are origin (ORI). It has shown that foreign visitors are more appreciate the authenticity of Iban Longhouse as it cannot be found in their countries. The second variable is the education (EDU) variable. Most of the studies had found that educated people seem to be more willing to pay for conservation compared to less educated people. It may be due to the awareness and knowledge of the conservation. The third variable is work (WOR). The higher their income, the more they are willing to pay for conservation. Variable is significant for motivation factor is motivation

(MOT) variable. Motivation is one of the big roles that encourage visitors to involve in conservation as this will fulfil their needs and desire. The next significant variable is the environment (ENV) variable. The environment especially in a rural setting might influence the visitors to pay for conservation especially foreign visitors. Lastly is the culture (CUL) variable. The culture strongly influences visitors to conserve especially among foreign visitors. The results also revealed that all these significant variables are significant at 1%.

However, for the case of interaction variables, only ORI, EDU, MOT and CUL are significant with positive coefficient signs.

4.4 Visitor's Willingness to Pay

Table 4 indicates the Willingness to Pay estimation for conservation fees by origin. The results revealed the mean willingness to pay for conservation fees of local visitors is RM28.59. Meanwhile, the mean willingness to pay for conservation fees of foreign visitors is RM44.89. This revealed that foreign visitors are willing to pay higher conservation fees compares to local visitors. This may be because the fee stay per night at Iban Longhouse Homestay would be a small proposition as compared to the experience they were gained at Iban Longhouse Homestay. Meanwhile, the result shows local visitors are more willing to pay a lower amount than foreign visitors. This may be due to the reason this was not their first time visiting Iban longhouse in Sarawak. This finding is evidence that both local and foreign visitors are willing to pay for conservation and pay higher than current fee charges.

Table 4 Estimated Revenue from Conservation Value

	Local visitors	Foreign visitors
Mean WTP	RM28.59	RM44.89
Composition of Selective Iban Longhouse Homestay visitor numbers in 2019	4,433	208
Potential value	RM126,739.47	RM9,337.12
Total estimated Iban Longhouse Homestay values	RM136,076.59	

The table also revealed that the estimated total conservation value of the selected established Iban Longhouse Homestay is RM135,504.79. The potential value of conservation fees will be suggested to the Ministry of Tourism, Art, and Culture of Sarawak and Homestay Operator to help the local community apart from earning the income, it will support the focus to provide a better offer of attractions for visitors visiting Iban Longhouse Homestay.

Consider that the conservation fees will be applied for all Iban Longhouse Homestay, with the help of the Ministry of Tourism, Art, and Culture it will help Iban Longhouse Homestay to perform better in the future. Not only for conservation but also help to sustain the culture and heritage tourism in Sarawak. It is suggested to Homestay Unit and Ministry of Tourism, Art and Culture of Sarawak and Sarawak Tourism Board to work out the consideration to apply the conservation fees for Iban Longhouse Homestay in Sarawak. It will be a further step for Iban Longhouse Homestay as conservation fees have not applied at any homestay in Sarawak. In the future, other homestay was able to employ the conservation charge on their respective homestay.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This study was motivated by a visible gap in the knowledge of economic values for Iban Longhouse Homestay in Sarawak. Filling the gap offers the opportunity for such economic values to be captured by countries with rich cultures and heritage through public funding to aid preservation and conservation.

This study was discovered that local visitors and foreign visitors are ready to pay the extra charge for conservation fee to stay per night at Iban Longhouse Homestay, which is most of them are willing to pay more than RM20 for conservation fee. In a nutshell, Willingness to Pay (WTP) could be applied as a tool for adjusting pricing policies in conservation, not only for National Parks but also applied for traditional building conservation. Laarman & Gregersen (1996) proclaimed that an optimal pricing strategy should be a combination of the information collected from visitors and policy objectives. Results presented in this study can be applied to inform policymakers of one way towards sustainably managing the Iban Longhouse Homestay while being aware of the potential impact on tourist arrivals. The findings on the

visiting motivation and the conservation value of Iban Longhouse Homestay using Contingent Valuation Method (CVM) gives an entirely new evaluation to the State of Sarawak especially the demand side of tourism. This is the first research done to measure the Willingness to Pay (WTP) of the traditional building in Sarawak.

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