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The Role of Social Capital and Social Media in Tourism Development Towards the Wellbeing of the Mah Meri Community in Carey Island, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to close the social media and social capital gaps for sustainable indigenous tourism. It encompasses social media's active participation, social capital, and community sources for sustainable indigenous tourism on Carey Island, Malaysia's Mah Meri. The utilisation of social media in the development of Indigenous tourism is shaped by the application of social capital theory and a quantitative methodology. The application of social media to sustainable tourism fills the gap in the Social Capital Theory. Structural equation modelling (SEM) and partial least squares (PLS) analysis aim to assess the relationship between exogenous and endogenous factors. The outcomes revealed that community sources (including culture, nature, and knowledge) and social media (adaption, participation, interactivity and sharing) significantly influenced sustainable Indigenous tourism. The results of a hierarchical multiple regression analysis used to moderate factors showed that income and educational attainment significantly influenced the association between social capital and sustainable Indigenous tourism. The results of this study contributed fresh insights into the literature on tourism that leverages community social capital.

Keywords: Indigenous tourism, social capital, social media, sustainable

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INTRODUCTION

The global indigenous population is estimated to be about 370 million, approximately 5% of the world population (O'Bryan et al., 2021). The indigenous people reside in more than 70 countries, with the majority (70%) located in Asia

ISSN: 0128-7702 e-ISSN: 2231-8534 (O'Bryan et al., 2021). Indigenous tourism is sometimes used interchangeably with "aboriginal tourism" or "ethnic tourism," as it is distinguished by the difference between aboriginal tourism or indigenous tourism and ethnic tourism.

Social capital, which includes institutions, relations, attitudes, values, and norms, is highly connected with sustainable development (Salari Sardani et al., 2014). Rezazadeh et al. (2016) indicated that social capital moderates the relationship between the development of urban tourism and sustainable urban development. A study by Johari and Kunasekaran (2019) revealed the average and strong relationship between social capital and sustainable indigenous tourism dimensions. The relationship between social capital and community-based tourism to provide insights into collective capacity and self-determination. Similarly, Moscardo et al. (2017) and Parmawati et al. (2018) highlighted the limited study on social capital in the development of communitybased tourism. Therefore, it underlined the need for further study on social capital in Indigenous tourism. However, it is still at the infancy level of 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 Indigenous tourism has been relatively less researched by past studies (Lu et al., 2018; Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Xiang and Gretzel (2010) further pointed out that '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 further study on social media in relation to sustainable tourism. In this study, the Mah Meri community was chosen as the leading indigenous group actively involved in tourism in Malaysia.

Literature Review

Sustainable development is 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. This statement was said to be misleading as it 'indicates a great deal of ambiguity in this concept, and it has been problematic ever since (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018). Tourism development has been realised to generate positive changes via sustainable tourism (Hashemkhani Zolfani et al., 2015).

As provided in Figure 1, Sustainable tourism and community resources are significant in introducing positive benefits and creating some regulation and development for culture, natural resources and indigenous knowledge associated with the community-based tourism theory (Bramwell & Lane, 2012). On the other hand, sustainable tourism creates awareness concerning the relatively low impact of nature and the support of stakeholders (Lee, 2013; Lee & Hsieh, 2016). It decreases resource costs, creates market differentiation to reduce profitability and compromises competitiveness. Sangchumnong and Kozak (2018) carried out a study to assess the sustainable cultural heritage tourism at one tourist village.

Tourism development is influenced by social media tools. Most people use social media applications on their mobile devices (e.g., tablets and smartphones) for many reasons. It also allows travellers to share trip experiences and opinions (Roque & Raposo, 2016; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). There are several types of social media commonly used by internet users, such as social networking (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+); microblogging (e.g. Twitter, Tumblr); photo sharing (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest) and video sharing (e.g. YouTube, Facebook Live, Periscope, Vimeo).

Tourism contributes significantly to the economic benefits to Indigenous people by offering jobs (Amoamo et al., 2018). It is also perceived as "a socio-economic cureall for Indigenous peoples". The indigenous community in Malaysia represents around 12% of the Malaysian population, most of whom reside in East Malaysia, while the remaining reside in Peninsula Malaysia (Isa et al., 2016). The indigenous communities in Peninsula Malaysia are relatively small in number, representing only 0.5% (178,000) of the entire population of Malaysia. They can be categorised into three groups (Abdullah et al., 2015): (1) Semang (Negrito), (2) Senoi and (3) Proto Malay (Aboriginal Malay). Each group has a different language, beliefs, living style, culture and ethnicity (Abdullah et al., 2015; Isa et al., 2016).

Cultural impacts impact the Mah Meri community's quality of life (Majin et al., 2016). Thus, the attitude towards tourism development in Carey Island is positive, and they support tourism. There is also a tendency to increase the exploitation of indigenous people. The evolution of social capital has been discussed by Woolcock (2001). It 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 parts: 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). It comprises three features: trust, reciprocity, and cooperation (Kwon & Adler, 2014; Park et al., 2012). It assists a group or community in sustaining itself.

Tourists commonly use social media to make travel decisions, plan trips, share information pertaining to their trips, and exchange information (Edwards et al., 2017; Lu et al., 2018; Pabel & Prideaux, 2016). For example, Pabel and Prideaux (2016) conducted a study to understand the use of social media for information searching before the trip begins for a small coastal destination in Port Douglas, Queensland, Australia.

The Social Capital theory employed in tourism provides the bonding, bridging, and linking of social capital (Kumar et al., 2021). Tourism affects the Mon community due to several negative cultural impacts (e.g., apparel, customs, beliefs) and economic impacts (e.g., income distribution). The Community-Based Tourism (CBT) theory has been widely used in the past tourism literature. The CBT theory is broadly related to the enormous range of tourism products, such as traditional performances, natural resources, and handicraft products generated by the communities. The adoption of participation for interaction and sharing of social media integration theory is employed for sustainable tourism (Alam & Kuppusamy, 2023). Economic, social, cultural, and environmental sustainability indicates the local communities that own and manage the lodges or homestays in the local communities. The sustainable tourism theory reflects the significance of the local communities setting up their own smallscale self-managed business. Therefore, the local communities prefer utilising natural resources, cultural practices, local food, and lodges as tourism offerings to attract local and international tourists. There are three hypotheses in the present study, as provided by H1, H2, and H3, for the direct effects between the constructs. This follows:

H1: Community resources have a direct effect on sustainable tourism

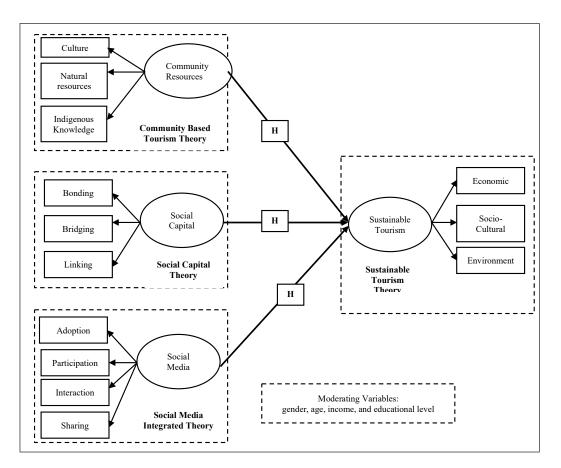


Figure 1. The framework of the study

H2: Social capital has a direct effect on sustainable tourism

H3: Social media has a direct effect on sustainable tourism

H4: Socio-demographic moderating the relationship between community resources, social capital, social media, and sustainable indigenous tourism.

The present study formed a new conceptual framework by combining four components: community resources, social capital, social media and sustainable tourism, which had been explored separately in previous studies. In addition, this combination has not been fully executed in indigenous tourism (Sumra & Alam, 2021). The study outcomes will help fill the research gap in social capital theory in relation to social media utilisation and sustainable tourism. This study also introduces new constructs named community resources, including culture and natural and indigenous knowledge. Hence, it will significantly contribute to the body of knowledge of Indigenous tourism. Finally, the study has also formed a new conceptual framework by combining four theories: Community Based Tourism Theory, Social Capital Theory, Social Media Integrated Theory and Sustainable Tourism Theory, which have been investigated separately in previous studies. Thus, the outcomes of the study will provide new insights to the upcoming researchers who will examine the model further in various tourism fields.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A quantitative approach is used in this study to collect and analyse data. The study is inductive in nature as the social capital and Indigenous people variables are well explored in the past literature (Johari & Kunasekaran, 2019). The sample for the study was drawn from the total population of the Mah Meri community in Carey Island, which was derived from the Department of Orang Asli Development of the year 2019. The study was conducted among 202 indigenous communities of Mah Meri on Carey Island from April to August 2019. This study adopted purposive sampling methods whereby the researcher only managed to collect data from the Mah Meri community members who agreed and were willing to participate in the survey (Alam & Bahrein, 2021). The data was collected using the survey questionnaire and the Five-Likert questionnaire. Partial Least Squares (PLS)-Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis and Hierarchical Multiple Regression were applied in this study to analyse the collected data.

The target population for this study is Mah Meri communities in Carey Island. The statistics derived from the Department of Orang Asli Development for 2019 indicated that the total population of the Mah Meri community in Carey Island is 3762. This study adopted non-probability sampling because the chance of each member of the Mah Meri community being selected as a respondent for this study is not confirmed (Alam, 2022; Sumra et al., 2020). The purposive sampling method was also used in this study because the researcher only managed to collect data from the Mah Meri community members who agreed and were willing to participate in the survey. The Raosoft Sample Size Calculator was executed to measure the sample size for this study. The calculator estimates 349 Mah Meri people as a suitable sample size for this study (based on the Mah Meri community statistics. In addition, Suresh and Chandrashekara (2015) sample size calculator formula was used to recheck the sample size. Suresh and Chandrashekara (2015) recommended a sample size estimation formula to calculate the sample size: Sample size calculation formula.

$$\boldsymbol{n} = \frac{z^{2} \times p(1-p) / e^{2}}{1 + (z^{2} \times p(1-p) / e^{2}N)}$$

where n is the required sample size. P is the sample proportion, z is the critical value of the normal distribution at the required confidence level, and e is the margin of error.

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times p (1-p) / e^2}{1 + (z^2 \times p (1-p) / e^2 N)}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 (1-0.5) / 0.05^2}{1 + (0.05^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5) / 0.05^2 3762)}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.25 / 0.0025}{1 + (0.25 \times 0.25 / 9.405)}$$

$$n = \frac{384.16}{1.01}$$

$$n = 380$$

A number of statistical analyses of SPSS were applied in this study to examine the data and hypotheses testing. Finally, Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)-PLS (Partial Least Squares) analysis was executed to evaluate the exogenous and endogenous constructs' relation. After the data collection, coding was used to key the data systematically and easily into SPSS 21 (data analysis software) (Zikmund et al., 2013). The data was coded by assigning character symbols (using numerical symbols) and edited before entering into SPSS to execute the analysis of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) -Partial Least Squares (PLS). Several tests were conducted to ensure all targeted assumptions remained assembled. There are 230 questionnaires distributed among the Indigenous community of Mah Meri on Carey Island from April 2019 to August 2019. Although the sample size calculator suggested 380 as a suitable sample size for this study, the researcher only managed to distribute 230 questionnaires due to the willingness of the community members to participate in the survey.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Subsequently, path analysis evaluates all proposed hypotheses in this study. The path coefficient or Beta (β) value is used as an indicator in this analysis to examine the designed hypotheses (Alam, 2022). The path coefficient value should be between -1 to +1. Whenever the value is close to +1, it illustrates a strong positive relationship between constructs; a value close to -1 demonstrates a negative relationship. Furthermore, if the value is close to 0, it shows a weak and non-significant relationship between constructs (Hair et al., 2018). Most researchers used the t-value via bootstrapping analysis in SEM-PLS as a statistic to exhibit the relationship between the two tested constructs (Hair et al., 2014). The t-value in this analysis should be greater than 1.96. Whenever the value is 1.96 and above, it illustrates a significant relationship between constructs; therefore, the alternative hypothesis will be accepted (Arkkelin, 2014).

For Hypothesis 1, the outcome in Figure 2 showed a direct correlation between sustainable indigenous tourism and the community source, with a t-value of 5.329

(more than 1.96) and a path coefficient (β) of 0.393. Consequently, this theory is validated. Cheng et al. (2017) found a strong correlation between social media and the sustainability of tourism destinations, which is in line with this outcome. Comparably, research by Liu et al. (2020) showed that social media is crucial for interaction. communication, and behaviour modification among tourists. It is also significant for the growth of the travel industry. The result indicated that the community source directly relates to sustainable Indigenous tourism, where the path coefficient (β) is at 0.250, and the t-value is 3.459 (greater than 1.96). Hence, this hypothesis is supported.

For Hypothesis 2, the outcome of the analysis revealed in Figure 3 that

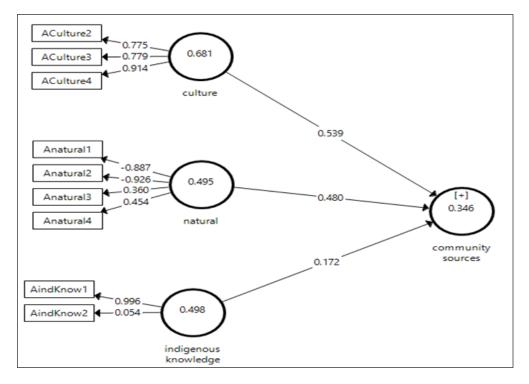


Figure 2. Reflective Assessment (PLS) Community Source

social capital has a direct relationship with sustainable indigenous tourism, where the path coefficient (β) at -0.441 and t-value is 5.877 (greater than 1.96). Figure 3 illustrates a negative and direct relationship between social capital and sustainability. Thus, this hypothesis is supported. This result is against the findings of Watson et al. (2011) and Waylen et al. (2009), who illustrated a significant relationship between social capital, sustainability, and the cultural heritage of Indigenous people. This negative relationship can be interpreted as the Mah Meri people are comfortable working in their own smaller groups rather than having social capital development for sustainability.

For Hypothesis 3, the reflective assessment provided in Figure 4 indicates the association of social media with the leading elements. Similarly, Yongrui et al. (2018) underlined that all dimensions of social media (including adoption, participation, interaction, and sharing) significantly influence the community's commitment to tourism development. However, Suess et al. (2018) stressed that imbalanced power and bonding can lead to negative perceptions and commitments towards tourism development.

This finding is also supported by Lee and Jan (2019a), Mtapuri and Giampiccoli (2013), and Simpson (2008), who found that the community's local culture and natural environment significantly influence the development of tourism destinations. Similarly, studies by Baum et al. (2016) and Kunasekaran et al. (2015, 2017) supported this finding by highlighting the essential role of indigenous economic and socialcultural environment in Figure 5. It follows

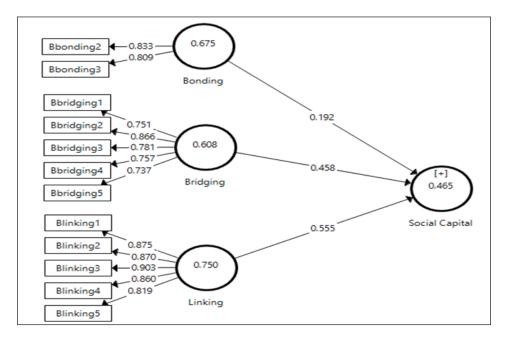


Figure 3. Reflective Assessment (PLS) Social Capital

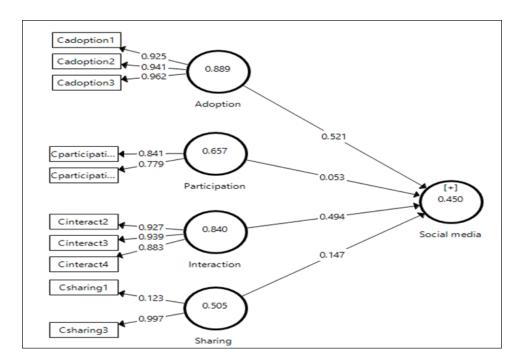


Figure 4. Reflective Assessment for Social Media

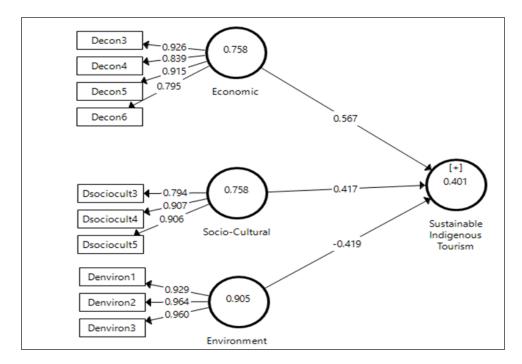


Figure 5. Reflective Assessment (PLS) Sustainable Indigenous Tourism

the culture and knowledge in developing and sustaining community-based tourism. However, Nair et al. (2012), Oswald et al. (2007), and Siow et al. (2015) stressed the negative effects of community-based tourism, which badly damages nature and the environment to cater for the demands of various tourists.

In line with this, path analysis was conducted through the PLS algorithm and bootstrapping calculation to evaluate the relationship between constructs. The testing of the three hypotheses in Table 1 of this study are a) the direct relationship between community source and sustainability, b) the direct relationship between social capital and sustainability, and c) the direct relationship between social media and sustainability. Table 1 demonstrates the hypothesised relationships of Hypothesis 1 (H1), Hypothesis 2 (H2), and Hypothesis 3 (H3). Figure 4 shows the path coefficient between exogenous and endogenous constructs.

As reflected in Figure 6, the findings of the direct effect of community resources towards sustainable Indigenous tourism (at t-value = 3.459) are consistent with previous studies which have validated the occurrence of the relationship between these two constructs (Baum et al., 2016; Kunasekaran et al., 2015, 2017; Lee & Jan, 2019b; Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2013). Studies by Kunasekaran et al. (2015, 2017) confirmed a significant relationship between community resources (including natural environment, culture and community knowledge) and tourism development. Crippen and Salevurakis (2019) revealed that tourism activities in rural and community-based areas help generate economic and social benefits for local communities through employment opportunities.

The paper's findings provided that the study's response rate was calculated, and the non-responses test was executed. Then, data screening and cleaning analysis were performed. Several tests, such as missing data analysis, outliers, normality, and multicollinearity, were conducted in this process. Demographic profile analyses were followed to elaborate on the respondent's profiles. Next, measuring and structural models were evaluated through SEM-PLS analysis. Both convergent and discriminant validities were used in the measurement

Hypotheses	Relationship (Exogenous -> Endogenous)	Path Coefficients (β)	t-value	P-value*	Decision
H1	Community Source -> Sustainable Indigenous Tourism	0.250	3.456	0.000	Supported
H2	Social Capital -> Sustainable Indigenous Tourism	-0.441	5.877	0.000	Supported
Н3	Social media -> Sustainable Indigenous Tourism	0.393	5.320	0.000	Supported

Table 1 *Hypothesis testing*

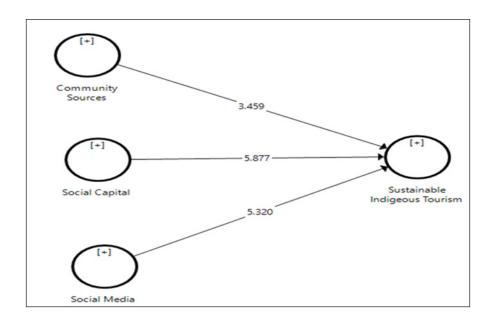


Figure 6. Path coefficient between exogenous and endogenous constructs

model analysis, and satisfactory results were illustrated. In the structural model, the direct effect or relationship between constructs was implemented. The outcomes of this analysis indicated that all three hypotheses were accepted. The moderating effects through Hierarchical Multiple Regression analysis demonstrated that income and educational level significantly influenced sustainable indigenous tourism. Hence, it clearly indicated that community sources, social capital and social media significantly influence sustainable indigenous tourism. Local communities illustrated full commitment and support to tourism development in their destination because the development brings more positive effects to the communities (Gunawijaya & Pratiwi, 2018).

The Malaysian government, Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC),

tourism authorities, Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA), and policymakers can get some insights on enhancing and sustaining community-based tourism. Although past studies illustrated a significant relationship between bonding, linking, bridging and sustainability, the findings provided new insight to tourism authorities by highlighting a non-significant relationship between these constructs. Therefore, they can't fully depend on social capital to influence the sustainability of community-based tourism.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The empirical analysis of the direct effects towards sustainable indigenous tourism is the main theoretical contribution to the research, especially to tourism literature. First, community resources (including culture, nature, and knowledge) and social media (adaption, participation, interactivity, and sharing) have significantly influenced sustainable Indigenous tourism. Secondly, the outcomes revealed that social capital did not influence sustainable indigenous tourism, although past literature demonstrated a significant relationship between these variables. Thirdly, the study also presented an extended research model that combined community resources, social capital, social media, and sustainable tourism, which had not been tested together in previous studies. Most of these constructs were tested separately or combined with two related constructs in the past literature. Thus, the findings of this study added new knowledge to the tourism literature.

The second contribution of this study is practical. The study is anticipated to offer managerial insights and suggest fundamental enhancements to the tourism industry, with a specific focus on community-based tourism. The study's primary objective was to examine the influences of community sources, social capital, and social media on the sustainable indigenous tourism of Mah Meri in Carey Island, Malaysia. The study's outcomes demonstrated direct effects between all these constructs, aligning with previous research. However, the study also revealed a negative relationship between social capital and sustainable indigenous tourism, contradicting most prior findings. On the other hand, community sources and social media showed a positive relationship with sustainable Indigenous tourism, consistent with earlier research. This study faced several limitations, such

as difficulty data (rural setup) and female respondents, as many of the Orang Asli were uncomfortable being interviewed.

The policy implications and management for this research outcome contribute new insights to the body of knowledge, particularly in sustainable and communitybased tourism fields. Importantly, the study enhances practitioners such as MOTAC, Majlis Perbandaran Kuala Langat and local communities in Carey Island's understanding of utilising and integrating community sources, social capital, and social media to sustain Indigenous tourism in the future. The model generated in this study should serve as a foundation and guide for future research in sustainable and communitybased tourism fields. Additionally, the study furthers exploration in the prominent area of sustainable indigenous tourism.

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