

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE TOURISTIFICATION OF BRUNEI'S KAMPONG AYER AS A TOURISM PRODUCT

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Abstract

This research is part of a larger project investigating stakeholders' various roles in the touristification of Kampong Ayer, a collection of villages on stilts above the Brunei River. This research aims to map out and analyse the extent of local residents' involvement in the touristification of Kampong Ayer, Brunei Darussalam. Kampong Ayer had been portrayed and promoted as among the most significant tourist landmarks in the Sultanate for decades. More recently, the state has shown a more concerted effort in their agenda of making Brunei a tourist destination that is at par with other international tourist attractions. This study seeks to analyse the local community's involvement and participation in the tourism industry. This study is based on the stakeholder theory pioneered by Freeman (1984). The identification of local stakeholders is categorised into two; primary and secondary stakeholders. Findings show limited participation from local residents in tourism planning and management through their involvement shows a positive impact; they have the agency to shape and influence Kampong Ayer tourism. In contrast, secondary stakeholders, though having some form of stake over tourism developments in the area, is to a great extent, passive receivers of tourism lacking the motivation to develop tourism further in Kampong Ayer. Another significant finding is the lack of networking between stakeholders to realise a sustainable tourism industry in Kampong Ayer. This research is an ethnographic study based on two years of research on the field site.

Keywords: community involvement, local stakeholders, touristification, state agenda

Introduction

Brunei's water village, officially known as Kampong Ayer is one of the most important national landmarks in the country. This is due to its historical significance as the birthplace of Brunei Darussalam's political and administrative centre in the 16th century, dubbed as the 'Venice of the East' by the Italian explorer and scholar Antonio Pigafetta. Kampong Ayer today is still a living and breathing community, housing some twelve thousand population living over stilt houses above the Brunei River, displaying both traditional and modern lifestyles. The uniqueness of Kampong Ayer has been used to promote Brunei's tourism industry. More recently, the government has been making more concerted efforts in developing its tourism sector towards achieving economic diversification. However, due to the lack of research on tourism developments in Brunei, this case study on Kampong Ayer tourism can shed some light on how areas are being 'touristified' in the country and that which involves multiple stakeholders.

In many developing countries, the state is usually at the forefront of tourism development, taking a top-bottom approach in tourism policy, planning and management. Matland (1995) saw tourism policy as being drafted on the top level of the political hierarchy, with the state as central actors implying that they have the expertise and knowledge of the real issues to be tackled and therefore are in a better position to propose purposeful policy (p.149). Policy-making and its implementation are thus prescriptive, to be accepted and adhered to by the public. One of the main goals of state regulation is to create optimal conditions for tourism development through legal and economic mechanisms distribution of material and human resources, which considers the state's priorities (Lipková, Madiyarova, & Blembayeva, 2020).

Since Kampong Ayer is a direct residential area, community involvement significantly makes tourism sustainable and successful. Community involvement in tourism developments has been deemed imperative to the success of tourist areas (Inskip, 1991; Tosun, 2000). The success of tourism areas has been linked to ideas of sustainability and away from mere profit-making means, which can be achieved through the active participation of local communities in the planning and development of tourist areas (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Timothy & Tosun, 2003; Getz & Jamal, 1994). The last decade of the twentieth century observed tourism researchers concerned with planning, management and sustainability issues. According to Bramwell and Lane (1993), the concept of sustainable tourism was a reaction and response to the many tourism issues and impacts faced by societies and traditional cultures. The negative impacts of tourism have caused serious issues for local communities, such as overpopulation, environmental pollution, and cultural degradation. Thus, local communities need to be part of the planning

and managing tourism developments as most of these attractions are directly part of their neighbourhoods.

Theoretical Framework

The literature on Brunei Darussalam's tourism industry is slowly growing due to the government's more concerted efforts in developing its tourism sector in the past decade. Kampong Ayer, or the water village, has been the main tourist attraction in Brunei for decades, as reflected in the many printed tourism materials and brochures (Amalina Khalid & Hanafi Hussin, 2018). Although Kampong Ayer had been subjected to touristification due to its cultural and national significance, little is known about how tourism is being developed, practised and managed in the area by various stakeholders. The idea that local communities are passive receivers of tourism is not as valid today as these communities are normally the first ones to be affected by any changes or developments in their area. Thus, to understand better how these different players practice their agencies in the touristification of Kampong Ayer, this paper employs a stakeholder theory as well as touristification and participation concepts.

Touristification

According to Wöhler (as cited in Alexandra Joana Bol Esteve and Ruben Arandisi-Agramunt [2020]), the concept of touristification, its empirical observation and its description and analysis differ among scholars in tourism studies. Touristification generally means transforming a place to cater to the tourism industry. More recently, the term touristification has been used in the media with a more negative connotation and linked to issues of over tourism, and tourism-phobia from the massification of a destination (Ojeda & Kieffer, 2020). In urban geography, the term is more popular in relation to urban gentrification. Jover and Diaz-Parra (2020) note that touristification is a process that encompasses "displacement and other material and symbolic consequences stemming from mass tourism on a given territory. [...] Touristification contributes to a loss of authenticity in these spaces by the socio-spatial transformations of neighbourhoods in line with the needs of consumers with high purchasing power" (Jover & Diaz-Parra, 2020, p. 5). In Europe, former historical working-class neighbourhoods have been transformed into tourist areas by gradually replacing traditional residential and commercial activities with places of entertainment and leisure and the establishment of private accommodations to cater to tourists (Mendes, 2018). While physical spaces are transformed, so as material cultures. Lukas Christian Husa (2020) noted that the production of handicraft objects has

increased and become a significant source of traditional income in two Northern Thai villages.

While many early researchers have considered communities as passive receivers of tourism, whereby touristification processes and tourism developments are simply a national agenda being exerted upon communities, the concept of touristification enables researchers to acknowledge that the processes are more complex. Picard (2010), in his study of tourism in Bali, saw that “far from being an external force striking a society from without, tourism-or, rather, [...] touristification of a society – proceeds from within, by blurring the boundaries between the inside and the outside, between what is ‘ours’ and what is ‘theirs’, between that which belongs to culture and that which pertains to tourism.”

Pickel-Chevalier (2012, as cited in Ojeda and Kieffer [2020]) argued that touristification is not an abstract process but one that proposes analysing how different stakeholders and factors drive the transition to an economy based on tourism activities in a determined territory. It is important to talk about touristification by identifying the distinct elements and stakeholders involved in the process. As Ojeda and Kieffer (2020) note, “We argue for a correct use of the term touristification, focused on the territorial phenomenon and process it is meant to describe in a geographical approach without preconceived ideological notion, to construct knowledge from a territorial understanding of tourism in an ever-globalised world” (p. 143). Travel and tourism have evolved and developed globally and are ingrained into society that it is no longer a ‘social phenomenon’ outside one’s culture. Touristification is as much a top-down (Gotham, 2005) and bottom-up approach and involves various stakeholders. It should not be seen as merely a tourism development of a place but as the gradual process of transforming a place into an area suitable for tourism consumption. The usage of touristification as a concept is neither positive nor negative, as it allows for a broader understanding of the subject matter. Freytag and Bauder (2018) argued that what is clear is that touristification is not a unidimensional determinist cause-and-effect model.

According to Katahenggam and Wee (2020), touristification is observed rather differently in the Asian context. Instead of looking at touristification as part of a gentrification process, two types of touristification could be observed; physical and cultural. Such as in Singapore, state-driven urban renewal efforts ‘both pragmatic development-led initiatives and efforts to spatially create an identity for the city-state’ (Ooi, 2011 as cited in Katahenggam & Wee [2020]). On the other hand, cultural touristification is described as the cultural transformation from the influence of tourism (Picard, 2010). Picard concluded that the Balinese culture is an amalgamation of various local traditions presented as tourism products, thus

the term 'Balinization'. The idea of touristification goes beyond the commodification of culture, but the state constantly uses it to serve as a branding image to meet the socio-political needs of certain nations (Ooi, 2011; Wu & Cao, 2021).

Stakeholder theory

The term 'stakeholder' was first used in the management literature at the Stanford Research Institute in 1963; stakeholder was "those groups without whose support the organisation would cease to exist." (Freeman, 1984, p. 31). From this concise definition, it can be argued that local communities are stakeholders, as their lack of participation and involvement may lead to the failure of the tourist attraction. Freeman first pioneered stakeholder theory, *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach* (1984). Freeman's basic approach is that in the modern capitalistic society, relationships have become more complex and that for a firm to survive, managers must try to meet all stakeholders' interests. The stakeholder concept has been used widely in business management with growing definitions and interpretations; stakeholders as claimants (Cornell & Shapiro, 1987); stakeholders are those who have interests in the actions of an organisation and also possess the ability to influence the firm (Savage, Nix, Whitehead, & Blair, 1991); stakeholder involves individuals or groups who have, or claim, ownership of the firm (Clarkson, 1994). Clarkson further classified two types of stakeholders; primary and secondary. Primary stakeholders are those groups whose participation is crucial; without their continuous involvement, the corporation will not survive. Secondary stakeholders, on the other hand, are those who influence or are influenced or affected by the corporation but are not engaged in transactions with the corporation and are not essential for the corporation's survival. However, secondary stakeholders, such as opposing policies and programs, can still threaten and damage the firm.

Jamal and Getz (1995) saw that the most basic argument presented in much of the tourism planning and management literature is the need to involve all persons affected by the proposed tourism developments actively. Sautter and Leisin (1999) proposed that all identified stakeholders must be integrated to the management process, in which they developed the 'Stakeholder Orientation Matrix', proposing orientation strategies that promote cooperation among stakeholders in the planning and implementation process. The stakeholder theory enables the researcher to include all relevant parties into the framework and not simply a business transaction between two parties but that which is constantly being shaped by a network of stakeholders and their relation to one another. While earlier researchers saw the community as a passive receiver of tourism

development, the stakeholder theory enables it to include everyone. Freeman (1984) proposed a four-step stakeholder management process: i) identification of all relevant stakeholders, ii) determining the stakes for each stakeholder group, iii) how effectively their needs and expectations are currently being met, and iv) modification or adjustments of corporate policies and priorities. Getz and Timur (2005) emphasised that although various stakeholders have different opinions, goals, and interests, their voices have to be considered in achieving sustainable tourism development.

Since the 1990s, the idea of stakeholders has become increasingly significant in the area of tourism planning. Notably in the context of the interrelationship between the government, business, and society (Fitri Rahmafritria et al., 2020). In practice, the relationships among stakeholders are often strained, contributing to tourism planning and development ineffectiveness. Many examples have revealed that self-interest and lack of trust among stakeholders can derail many tourism planning and collaborative efforts (Pearce, 2019; Azizan Marzuki et al., 2012; Fitri Rahmafritria et al., 2020; Auttarat et al., 2021). Getz and Jamal (1994) stated that sustainable tourism could be achieved through collaborative approaches, recognising interdependent stakeholders, public and private sectors, host communities and the natural environment. No single individual, agency or group can resolve strategic tourism issues by acting alone.

Participation

Local communities not a homogenised group, composed of various levels of income-earners also influenced by their social and cultural capital. This also affects their level of participation in the tourism industry. The issue of participation has been problematised by Arnstein, who created the 'ladder of participation' and was further developed and used by Pretty's typology of participation. Arnstein's (1969) 'ladder of citizen participation' is very influential in showing what kind of power citizens possess when making decisions. There are eight participation levels: citizen power, which constitutes citizen control, delegated power and partnership; tokenism, which includes placation, consultation and informing; and non-participation group, which consists of therapy and manipulation. Similar to Arnstein's, Pretty (1995) claimed that participation has different meanings for different people and created a typology of participation; manipulative participation, passive participation, participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation, and self-mobilisation.

The two most positive participatory involvement are the 'self-mobilisation' and 'interactive participation'. In self-mobilisation, local residents

can self-regulate their businesses by taking their initiatives independently without an external agency trying to change the system but with the necessary enabling framework provided by the state and NGOs. In interactive participation, people actively participate in joint analysis, developing action plans and strengthening local institutions. People take control of local decisions and determine how resources are to be used, so each has a stake in maintaining structures and practices. The weakest type of participation is manipulative participation, where it is simply a pretence, where there are supposed people's representatives on official boards who do not have the power to influence any decision-making. The second weakest type of participation is passive participation, where people are simply informed about what has been decided or that which had already happened. This type of participation does not include listening to people's responses, whereby information shared instead belongs to external professionals.

With many nations trying to profit from mass tourism, there was an outspread of uncontrolled and unplanned tourism developments. The industry was generated by the idea of boosterism – a market-driven approach to development that had no care about the negative outcomes of tourism (Timothy, 2018). This led to serious negative impacts especially felt by communities at tourist destinations. Mass tourism's environmental and socio-cultural effects manifested in the form of loss of natural habitat for flora and fauna, environmental pollution, socio-cultural degradation, and unequal distribution of financial benefits (Cobbinah, Black, & Thwaites, 2013). The emergence of public and interest groups concerning the perceived negative effects of tourism led to demands for improved planning for tourism in the belief that it will help limit the impacts of tourism (Hall et al. 1997; Gunn & Var 2002; Dredge & Jenkins 2007; Dredge & Jamal 2015).

The effectiveness and inclusiveness of engagement processes in tourism was inspired by broader developments in planning (e.g., Healey, 2006). Relationships were increasingly seen as key for effective planning and policy, and questions started to emerge about how best to manage complex relationships and develop effective collaboration (e.g., Beaumont & Dredge, 2010; Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Jamal & Getz, 1996, as cited in Dredge & Jamal [2015, p. 290]). Tourism planning can maximise benefits for local communities and economies and promote the sound use of resources (Fitri Rahmafritria et al., 2020; Ampong, 2018; Gibson, 2009). Furthermore, the negative consequences of tourism development can be managed and controlled in tourist destinations with proper effective tourism planning (Almeida et al. 2017; Bianchi, 2018; Lew, 2017).

According to Costa (2020), the future of tourism planning will still focus on the concerns which emerged in the twentieth century; the goal of maximising tourism potential and minimising negative impacts on socio-cultural and the

environment. The increasing awareness of sustainable tourism for future generations will continuously shape tourism policy and planning. Tourism planning will maintain its focus on making sure that “tourism expands in a way that does not impact negatively on the physical and social environments, while, at the same time, it may bring more benefits to the industry and to the local population” (Costa, 2020, p. 199).

State agenda in touristifying Kampong Ayer

Due to the historical importance of Kampong Ayer and its uniqueness, Kampong Ayer stands among Brunei’s most significant landmarks. “Kampong Ayer, the “Water Village” which has become something of a global emblem or icon of the cultural identity of Brunei.” (King, 2016, p. 24). It is a natural and cultural heritage and the pride of the nation. It is timely with the tourism development, cultural heritage is a rapidly growing component in tourism because there is a trend towards increased specialised taste among tourists (Hussin, H., 2018a). In an analysis of printed tourism brochures, guidebooks, and tourist maps of Brunei tourism by both private and government agencies, Amalina Khalid and Hanafi Hussin (2018) noted that all tourism materials focused on Kampong Ayer as one of the leading tourist destinations in Brunei. The socio-cultural significance of Kampong Ayer continues despite losing its authentic traditional lifestyle found some hundred years ago, losing to rapid modernisation and sociocultural changes (Saadiyah Tamit, 2009). The location of Kampong Ayer in the heart of Bandar Seri Begawan makes this community even more significant as Bandar Seri Begawan houses many tourist attractions, such as the Royal Regalia Museum, Malay Technology Museum, the majestic Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque, and the recently built 12-hectare park, ‘Taman Mahkota Jubli Emas’ among others. One major symbolic step showing Kampong Ayer’s importance as a tourist destination is the opening of the Kampong Ayer Cultural and Tourism Gallery (KACTG) in 2009, which was valued at BND 3 million (~USD 2.2 million) and is managed by the state, Tourism Development Department of the Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism (then, Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources). The gallery is located in one of the villages of Kampong Ayer, which can be seen directly from across the river from the mainland area.

It is also important to highlight that Brunei’s tourism industry is still in the infancy stage due to its high dependency on the hydrocarbon sector. The state’s focus on its tourism industry has only been observed recently. In 2016, the state introduced the Tourism Order Act 2016 as a major step in improving the quality of tourism services and products in Brunei Darussalam. This milestone further strengthens the foundations of Brunei’s tourism industry. The years that followed

observed continuous efforts by the state to promote its tourism industry for both domestic and international tourism. A national campaign promoting Bandar Seri Begawan and Kampong Ayer began in early 2017, a collaboration between the state, village consultative councils, travel agents and tourism entrepreneurs. The Bandar Seri Begawan and Kampong Ayer Tour Packages aimed at providing “[...] well-organised tour packages for visitors, giving them clear information on the main attractions in Bandar Seri Begawan and Kampong Ayer and proper pricing for various packages”, as commented by the Minister of Primary Resources and Tourism during an interview by a local newspaper. In 2019, the state introduced two more packages: the “Brunei River Heritage Trail” and the “Kampong Ayer Walking Trail”. These are only a few examples of the state’s efforts in promoting tourism in the country, and those mentioned are related explicitly to Kampong Ayer tourism.

Methodology

Local residents are part of a greater network of stakeholders in the touristification of the water village; thus, its analysis of community involvement is done using the stakeholder framework, which is further supported by the participation concept. In order to gain insight into local residents’ involvement and participation in the tourism development of Kampong Ayer, a highly qualitative research method was conducted over an extended period of two years from 2017 through to 2019. As Henn, Weinstein and Foard (2006) noted, the qualitative approach enables the researcher to understand people's meanings of the world around them as these meanings govern their actions. The research was conducted in real-life settings; to study action and talk as it naturally occurs and to study ‘real’ views and ‘real’ behaviours, which would otherwise be unattainable in the quantitative method of research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Creswell (2014) noted that qualitative research enables the researcher to develop a detailed understanding of the situation from strong involvement in the experience. An insider’s perspective on the research problem is thus attained and understood in which closeness and rapport between the researcher and the people studied are formed (Henn et al., 2006).

The first step was identifying local stakeholders involved in the tourism of Kampong Ayer using Clarkson’s categorisation of primary and secondary stakeholders. After identifying stakeholders, rapport was built, especially among those categorised under the primary stakeholders who later became the main informants for this research. The author lived in one of the villages in Kampong Ayer for easy communication and to be able to experience and observe real-time tourism developments in Kampong Ayer, and to participate in any tourism

activities in the area. Three main methods of research were conducted; one-on-one informal interviews and participant and non-participant observation. Interviews form the backbone of primary data collection in qualitative research designs (Essa Ali Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). A map of Kampong Ayer is shown in Figure 1.

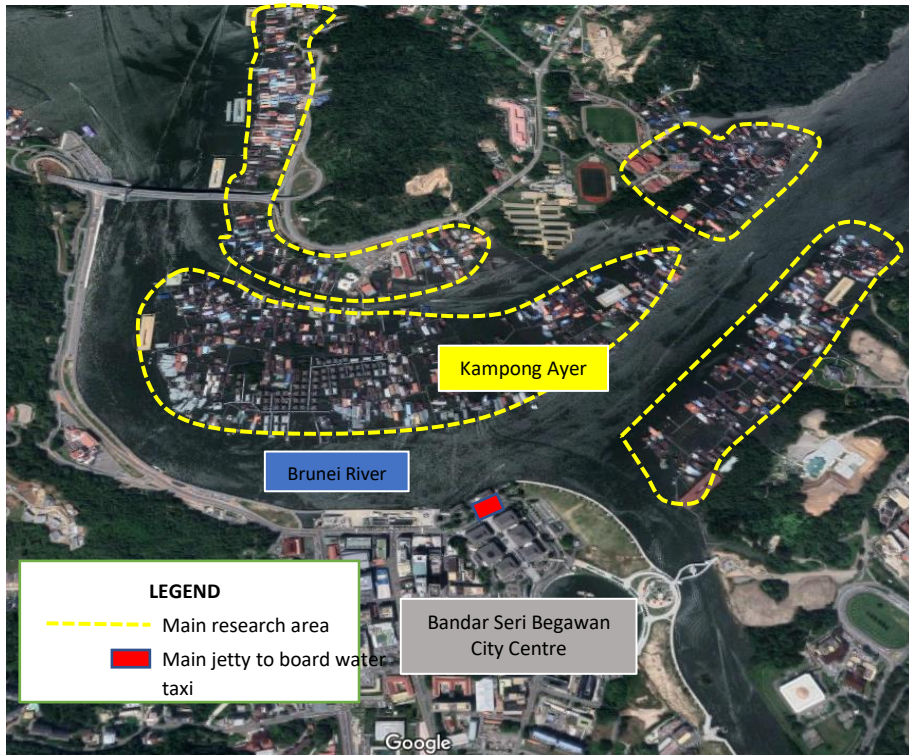


Figure 1: Bird's Eye View Map of Kampong Ayer and Main Area of Research
(Source: Author, adapted from Google [n.d.]

Unstructured and conversational interviews have their roots in the ethnographic tradition of anthropology (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In-depth interviews provide qualitative depth by allowing interviewees to talk about the subject in terms of their frames of reference, which enables the interviewer to maximise their understanding of the informant's point of view (Henn et al., 2006). Henn et al. (2006) also noted that one-on-one interviews are designed to explore issues in detail with the interviewee, using probes, prompts and flexible questioning styles to capture the informant's point of view rather than the researcher's concerns. "Informal conversations initiated and guided by the researcher while in the field are a kind of unstructured interview. With one's focus of inquiry clearly in mind, the researcher tactfully asks and actively listens to understand what is important

to know about the setting and the experiences of people in that setting.” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 81). Participant and non-participant observation were conducted throughout the research. The author was able to acquire a freelance tourist guide license in order to be able to participate in many tourism-related activities and to be part of a greater tourism development framework proposed by the state. With the license, the author could spend more time with the informant, observe how they practice tourism in the field, and gather data that would not be possible to collect using quantitative research methods. Historically, cultural anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict sought to understand people's lives on their terms by spending extended time with the people in their natural settings.

A total of twenty-five interviews (see Table 1) were conducted, which ranged from three minutes to one hour. All interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and the author also used a DSLR camera and a mobile phone to take photos. Note-taking using small notebooks also came in useful, especially during observations in the field. Interviews, participant observation and observation, were conducted on all primary informants. Close contact and observation of their tourism-related activities were crucial for this research. All data collected by recording were later on transcribed for data analysis. The qualitative nature of this research did not require the use of complex tools for data analysis. Following Strauss and Corbin (2015), data analysis is primarily concerned with describing what the researcher understood and reconstructing the data into a ‘recognisable reality’ for the people who have participated in the study.

Table 1: List of Interviewees

	Name	Affiliation	Type of Interview	Date / Interview Duration	Form of Recording
No.	(A) Kampong Ayer Residents				
1	Kemariah	Kunyit 7 Lodge	Semi-structured	07/08/2017 [1:26:44]	Digital voice recorder
2	Mokti	Village Head	Semi-structured	09/09/2019 [53:22]	Digital voice recorder
3	Wann	Mark Putra Delima Tours	Semi-structured	12/09/2018 [28:14]	Digital voice recorder
4	Ahmad	Water Village Malay Modern House	Unstructured	26/06/2017 [~15 minutes]	Note taking

5	Amy	Local resident of Kampong Tamoi Tengah	Unstructured	12/10/2018 [~15 minutes]	Note taking
6	Jamilah	Traditional <i>kueh</i> maker (Kampong Tamoi)	Unstructured	07/03/2018 [~10 minutes]	Note taking
7	Sarah	Roda Impian Cruise	Semi-Structured	09/09/2019 [36:41]	Digital voice recorder
8	Mariani	Prawn Cracker Maker	Unstructured	08/08/2019 [~10 minutes]	Note taking
9	Hassan	Boat Maker	Semi-structured	09/11/2019 [15:25]	Digital voice recorder
10	Siti	Boat Maker (Hassan) daughter in law	Semi-structured	09/11/2019 [21:35]	Digital voice recorder
11	Mazlan	Independent water taxi operator	Semi-structured	09/09/2019 [2:47]	Digital voice recorder
12	Tony	Independent water taxi operator	Semi-structured	12/09/2019 [7:49]	Digital voice recorder
13	Aming	Independent water taxi operator	Semi-structured	25/08/2018 [~3 minutes]	Note-taking
14	Madi	Independent water taxi operator	Semi-structured	12/09/2019 [3:27]	Note-taking
15	Ajim	Independent water taxi operator	Semi-structured	25/08/2018 [~3 minutes]	Note-taking
16	Ali Akbar	Independent water taxi operator	Semi-structured	05/07/2018 [~3 minutes]	Digital voice recorder
17	Roy	Independent water taxi operator	Semi-structured	05/07/2018 [~3 minutes]	Digital voice recorder
18	Ahmad Timbang	Pottery House	Unstructured	8/8/2019 [~10 minutes]	Note taking
19	Mastura	Traditional Cloth Weaver (Kampong Burong Pingai Ayer)	Unstructured	7/3/2018 [~10 minutes]	Note taking
(B) Private Sector					
20	Jodie	BonAsia Holiday, Marketing Executive	Semi-structured	24/07/2018 [10:47]	Digital voice recorder

21	Anwar	Sunshine Borneo Travel and Tours, Tour Guide	Semi-structured	13/08/2018 [30:47]	Digital voice recorder
22	Vicky	Al-Afiah Hotel	Semi-structured	13/08/2018 [~10 minutes]	Note-taking
23	Paula	Radisson Hotel, Marketing Manager	Semi-structured	20/07/2018 [~10 minutes]	Note-taking
© Government Officials					
24	Khairul	Tourism Development Department, MPRT [KACTG Manager]	Structured, Formal	03/04/2018 [29:27]	Digital voice recorder
25	Salinah	Tourism Development Department, MPRT [Acting Director]	Structured, Formal	03/08/2017 [25:56]	Digital voice recorder

(Source: Author's compilation)

Findings and Discussions

Local community involvement in the touristification of Kampong Ayer is quite limited. As previously stated, the current population in the Water Village is estimated at thirteen thousand pupils. However, the number of local residents who are directly and actively involved in the tourism arena only represents a small group of people. The local residents of Kampong Ayer can be categorised into two; primary and secondary stakeholders using Clarkson's (1995) categorisation. Those identified as primary stakeholders are residents who play a significant role in the touristification of Kampong Ayer. In contrast, secondary stakeholders are those involved in the process but do not depend on tourism activities as their main source of income.

Kampong Ayer and Bandar Seri Begawan for tourism consumption

In 2009 the Kampong Ayer Cultural and Tourism Gallery was opened in the water village, marking the state's first major step in promoting tourism in Kampong Ayer. Over the decades, more changes could be observed as part of the touristification of the area in line with the government's bigger agenda of regenerating and revitalising Bandar Seri Begawan. This capital city had been lacking socio-economic activities. This capital city had been lacking socio-economic activities which revitalisation projects contribute towards the improvement of the quality of life, generating more jobs, and transform and

implement reconstruction of the city (Maimunah Ramlee et al., 2015). Within the context of Bandar Seri Begawan revitalisation (Fahmi Ibrahim, 2018), more obvious touristification processes are observed in the area aside from promoting and marketing tourism products and services. This was mostly observed in the physical and transformation of the city to become more ‘tourist-friendly’; the erection of tourist signages and signboards, the availability of tourist information centres, provision of walking and cycling lanes, and most importantly the development of new tourist attractions within the city such as the 12-hectare Taman Mahkota Jubli Emas Park. Another significant activity which has enlivened the city is the state’s support for events and festivities to be hosted in the area. All of these developments have attracted visitors to the city centre. Kampong Ayer tourism stakeholders promote various tourism products and services (see Table 2). This is based on a tourism package promotion in state produced tourism brochures available at tourist information centres.

Table 2: Products and services promoted in Kampong Ayer

Type of Activity	Description	Number of Listed Places
House stops	Viewing of houses from the outside	Two
House visits	See the inside of the houses and talk with the owners regarding Kampong Ayer’s past and present	Three
Restaurants and mini marts	Places to eat and buy necessities	Two
Traditional food	Traditional food makers	Four
Craftsmanship	Watch traditional craftsmen at work: boat makers; woodcrafter.	Two
Accommodation	Place of stay for visitors	Two
Mangrove and Safari tour	Chance to see Proboscis monkeys in their natural habitat and other mangrove animals	Undetermined
Island hopping (by boat)	Kampong Ayer’s version of island-hopping based on folklore, myths, and legends.	Nine mini-islands listed
Gallery	Gallery of antiques, traditional attires; historical education of Kampong Ayer	Two

(Source: Author’s own compilation.)

Primary stakeholders as 'Pioneers'

Local primary stakeholders are the pioneers of the tourism industry, as it shows the possible involvement of the community to venture into the tourism industry and benefit from operating tourism-related businesses in Kampong Ayer. There are five pioneers representing the SMEs of the water village; Kuniyit 7 Lodge, Roda Impian Cruise, Mark Putera Delima Tours, Haji Ahmad and Pengarah Haji Mokti. These are the most active and proactive stakeholders and thus could be described as pioneers in their own right. The primary stakeholders provide services to cater to tourists and have been established for more than five years. Better than anyone, their involvement within the tourism industry means they are the experts of Kampong Ayer and have the potential to raise awareness to other local residents that tourism can be a form of livelihood in the water village.

Kuniyit 7 Lodge (K7L) is an AirBnB strategically located just across the main jetty down to Kampong Ayer. The house overlooks the Yayasan Building, a shopping mall, and Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Mosque. K7L began its operation in 2014 by a local lady. K7L has gained a lot of national and international attention since its operation, which by 2018, has managed to attract visitors from 48 different countries. It only took K7L two and a half years to host five hundred visitors, which translates to an estimation of fourteen visitors monthly. The two local tour operators active in Kampong Ayer tourism are Mark Putera Delima Tours (MPDT) and Roda Impian Cruise (RIC). Both of these are private registered tour operators owned by local residents of Kampong Ayer. MPDT began its operations in 2012 and is operated by a husband and wife duo. Over the years, they were able to acquire a number of boats to offer touring services in Kampong Ayer. Both owners have licensed tourist guides, and the husband is especially experienced in wildlife tours. RIC, on the other hand, started its operation providing chartering and transportation services in 2000. RIC began by offering water transportation services for daily commuters from Bandar Seri Begawan to another district in Brunei, Temburong. Over the years, RIC acquired more and bigger motorboats specifically for RIC to offer Kampong Ayer cruising services.

One of the most visited houses by VIPs in Kampong Ayer is the house owned by Pengarah Haji Mokti in Kampong Tamoi Ujong, Kampong Ayer. He's worked as the village head since the year 1975. His house had been visited by many international royal families and heads of state as part of state visits to Brunei Darussalam. At the Pengarah's house, visitors can observe traditional songs and dance performances, such as the *bemukun*. At the *pantaran* (veranda), locals could also be observed demonstrating the weaving of *nipah* leaves into small woven baskets and a live demonstration of cooking traditional cakes. These are all conducted by the Village Consultative Council of Kampong Tamoi (*Majlis*

Perundingan Kampong Tamoi), under the directives of the Pengarah. Another known figure in the tourism industry of Kampong Ayer is Haji Ahmad, who had worked as the village head of Kampong Lurong Sikuna for over ten years. Haji Ahmad initially opened his house to visitors by offering homestay services by promoting the “Water Village Malay Modern House”. However, by 2017, the state officially branded the village head’s house as a gallery. The gallery houses some traditional material cultures as well as a Malay wedding dais where tourists can take pictures while trying on traditional Malay wedding attire.

Raising awareness and image of Kampong Ayer internationally

One of the most significant roles of the primary stakeholders is to raise awareness and the image of Water Village to the world, which consequently promotes Brunei internationally. These stakeholders are active in promoting their services through various media platforms and have managed to attract many tourists to enjoy and experience the culture and way of life in the Water Village. Kunyit 7 Lodge has been featured in many international and national media coverages due to its uniqueness and success as a AirBnB. The international news media covering Kunyit 7 Lodge are CNN Travel, BBC World, Channel News Asia, Kumparan Travel, The Manila Times, Travel and Tour World, and Malaysia’s TV3. “Brunei’s Kampong Ayer ripe for rejuvenation on the back of tourism” (Board, 2018), “Brunei’s Kampong Ayer. World’s Largest Settlement of Stilts.” (Maggie Hiufu Wong & Dan Tham, 2017), and “Kampong Ayer relies on tourism for exploring its tradition and possibilities” (Travel and Tour World, 2018).

Similarly, the village heads of Kampong Lurong Sikuna and Tamoi Ujong were also featured in the media. World leaders who have visited Kampong Ayer and visited either of the village heads’ houses are (not in any particular order); Queen Elizabeth II, Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin of Terengganu Malaysia, Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri’ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah of Pahang Malaysia, President Joko Widodo of Republic of Indonesia, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhon of Thailand, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Nelson Mandela of South Africa and, Prince Edward and Princess Sophie of United Kingdom. Their visits to Kampong Ayer were reported in national and international media of the country these heads of the state represented. Some of the headlines read “King enjoys idyllic charm of Brunei’s Venice” (Bernama, 2019); “Wok-ing all over the world! Sophie Wessex makes and eats traditional Bruneian snacks on the third day of her state visit with Prince Edward” (Moore, 2017), and “Presiden Jokowi Ingin Tiru Kampong Ayer Brunei” (Tri Wahono, 2015) which loosely translates to “President Jokowi wants to copy Kampong Ayer”. These head of state visits to Kampong Ayer supports and enforces the idea that Kampong Ayer is a significant part of

Brunei's identity today, and it is undoubtedly one of Brunei's most important national landmarks.

Another platform stakeholders use to promote their tourism services is social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Brunei Darussalam's Instagram users are third highest in the world, accounting for sixty per cent in terms of population ratio (We Are Social and Hootsuite as cited in Azlan Othman [2020]). In contrast, the country stood as 10th highest globally for Facebook and the sixth highest number of users of Twitter. Global Digital Reports (as cited in Azlan Othman, 2020) revealed that more than 4.5 billion people across the globe use the Internet, thus making the internet and social media an important tool for marketing and promotion. Sigala (2012) noted that social media use affects tourism demand and supply. As of early 2021, Roda Impian Cruise had 3,777 followers on Instagram, 591 followers on Facebook, whereas Kunyit 7 Lodge had 7,754 followers on Instagram and 2,615 followers on Facebook. Mark Putera Delima Tour's Facebook has 314 and 91 followers on Instagram. The village head's gallery has 2361 followers on Facebook and does not use any other social media. The village head of Kampong Tamoi Ujong is the only stakeholder with no social media account; unlike the other stakeholders, he does not rely on tourism for his livelihood.

Negotiators and representatives of Kampong Ayer community

The primary stakeholders become negotiators and speakers of the Kampong Ayer community in tourism. The stakeholders' issues range from the lack of lights in the Water Village to the monopolisation of tourists by travel agents. The state is always in discussions with these stakeholders and is always open to suggestions as the state is also trying to encourage more participation from the community. Kunyit 7 Lodge has filed many complaints, especially regarding tourists' safety. At night, Kampong Ayer area are quite dark, thus, K7L requested more lighting in her area and raised her case by pointing out the possible negative repercussions to the image of Brunei's tourism industry if, for instance, accidents happen due to the negligence of the host community. The lightings were thus immediately fixed by the state. The village head also expressed concern over water taxi operators who do not wear life jackets and do not provide them to tourists. He remarked catching young individuals operating water taxis dangerously, disregarding people's safety. Many accidents have been reported involving tourists in the Water Village, potentially hurting the community's image. Thus, safety is taken very seriously by the stakeholders and the state.

Another significant issue raised is the benefits of tourism to the local community. Some travel agents and tour operators do not emphasise tourist

spending in Kampong Ayer: i) travel agents have their preferred house for tourists to visit, thus limiting the involvement of other potential local residents who can benefit from tourism, ii) external travel agents limit the time for tourists to enjoy Kampong Ayer thus having only impartial view of Kampong Ayer, iii) external travel agents ignore the importance of involving local residents and visiting the attractions in Kampong Ayer such as the Kampong Ayer Cultural and Tourism Gallery. Travel agents and tour operators can influence the market and have the power to promote what services and products are to be tailored for tourist consumption. As such, the stakeholders noted that these external travel agents and tour operators should be more sensitive to the local residents of Kampong Ayer and try to spread the economic benefits throughout the community by involving more local participation.

The problem of water pollution of the Brunei River affecting the image of Kampong Ayer is another issue that is raised not only by the local residents but both private and public agencies. According to the Department of Environment, Parks and Recreation (JASTRe), it is impossible to eliminate the problem of Kampong Ayer's waste issue (Arifubillah Masli, 2016) due to its complexity. Together with household rubbish being dumped into the Brunei River from Kampong Ayer community, there is also massive waste from drains, streams, water courses and river tributaries which flow to Kampong Ayer. In 2009 a study by Universiti Brunei Darussalam found that the rubbish in Kampong Ayer could fill an estimated 50 million garbage bags. Due to the recurring problems, some stakeholders have worked with NGOs in conducting Brunei River cleaning campaigns.

The examples above are some of the recurring issues brought forward by the primary stakeholders. In general, it focuses on the image of Kampong Ayer as a tourist attraction and safeguards that image, thus playing a major role in being the negotiator and representative of Kampong Ayer. However, these stakeholders have different levels of influence especially in the state. The village heads directly communicate with the state as they are working as government servants. However, they may be limited to touching on sensitive issues and acting on them due to their sensitivity. Other local stakeholders, such as business owners, would be more open and vocal about their opinions as they are not attached to any government institution. While these primary stakeholders have more dialogue with the state, they have very limited discussions with external travel agents or tour operators. The representation of the Kampong Ayer community in official agencies related to the tourism sector is also void, such as the Brunei Tourism Board which it consists of multiple state agencies, representatives of private

sectors, NGOs such as the Association of Travel Agents Brunei (ATAB), but lacking representation from the Kampong Ayer community.

Issues and challenges: Lack of networking, collaboration and dependency

Both primary and secondary stakeholders are involved in the touristification of Kampong Ayer. Primary and secondary stakeholders actively and proactively promote their products and services. This is tied to monetary benefits and dependence on tourism money for livelihood. Primary stakeholders are at the forefront and constantly negotiate with the state, but secondary stakeholders are more like passive receivers of tourism development. Primary stakeholders though having limited power in relation to the state, are still able to shape tourism developments in Kampong Ayer. On the other hand, secondary stakeholders are observed to be simply an “extension” of the products and services that Kampong Ayer tourism offers. The secondary stakeholders do not depend solely on gaining income from tourists and tourism; tourism in Kampong Ayer does not depend on their products and services. Because secondary stakeholders do not depend on tourism, they are not willing or motivated to be available for tourists daily. Thus, there were reported instances where tourists wanted to view specific traditional *kueh* making or other tourist spots, but the houses were empty; including these houses in tourist maps/brochures risks unsatisfactory reviews from tourists when they find that these places are not open for tourists viewing. A review of the houses and the printed tourism materials given to the public need to be done in order not to mislead tourists and visitors.

Another issue that needs to be highlighted is the limited cooperation among stakeholders and the lack of dependency on other community members to operate their businesses. These residents' tourism practices are limited to family members and occasionally with extended help from other local residents. In most cases, these hosts can manage their own tourism business on their own with minimal help from other people. Haji Ahmad, who used to offer homestay services, manages everything on his own, from accepting bookings through Facebook to cooking lunch and dinner for his guests. The only times he would hire another party is when a major event is to be hosted at his house, such as the Hari Raya celebration for the underprivileged families of the village or a visit from the international head of state. Similar to the other primary stakeholders, their businesses are being run by themselves with limited room for the participation of other local residents during their daily tourism practice. It is always during major events that greater community involvement is observed. On the other hand, Pengarah Haji Mokti has the help and support of the Village Consultative Council

whenever a major programme is conducted at his house. On normal days, however, the traditional performers are absent for tourist viewing.

Kampong Ayer community is not represented at the decision-making level, such as at the Brunei Tourism Board (BTB). While it is true that the minister and officers try to engage local people by visiting their houses and having a dialogue, Kampong Ayer should still be represented at the higher management level. The BTB consists of various state agencies, private agencies, NGOs, and should include representatives of Kampong Ayer in their own right. Kampong Ayer is a unique community whose way of life is different from those who live on land, and thus there are many aspects of the Kampong Ayer culture that need to be addressed when implementing policies and tourism master plans.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this paper is to analyse Kampong Ayer's community involvement in the touristification of Kampong Ayer through the roles they play within the context of the government's recent concerted effort in promoting Brunei Darussalam as a tourist destination and, more specifically, Kampong Ayer as its leading tourism product. The findings show that local residents are important players in the tourism industry as they play the role of the 'pioneers', which could stimulate further involvement and participation from other local residents. They set the example and show the possibility of developing their tourism-related business in the area. Their participation in the industry raises the awareness and image of Kampong Ayer internationally through their various marketing and promotion methods, such as through social media and indirectly through international media coverage. Kampong Ayer is among the main landmarks to be visited by international dignitaries, such as prime ministers and even royalties; this inevitably increases the awareness of Kampong Ayer as a tourist destination in Brunei through international media coverage. Another significant role of the primary stakeholders in the water village is to act as negotiators and representatives of the Kampong Ayer community. These active players in the tourism industry become the 'voice' of the people and tourists, whereby they negotiate with the government on issues which concern the community, such as lighting, safety, and other related issues in the area. The main issue discovered in this research is the lack of networking and cooperation between local residents and the lack of networking with external agencies that could further boost the local community's engagement in the tourism industry. This research is only one part of a larger project which only highlights the local community's involvement, but significant to our understanding of how Kampong Ayer is gradually being transformed into a space of tourism activities, in other words, touristification.

This research is evidence that Kampong Ayer tourism is developing positively. However, the small number of community involvement still needs to be addressed in line with the tourism policy, approaches, strategies, tourists' perceptions, the impact of tourism on communities, and other interlinked areas which support tourism (Hussin, H., 2018b). Further research into why Kampong Ayer's local community is shying away from the tourism industry, or there is not enough education and awareness on tourism practices despite the concerted effort made by the state. Multiple stakeholders need to work together to develop sustainable tourism in Kampong Ayer. It is imperative that the state, as managers and policymakers, plan and develop tourism that encourages participation from the local community. Local community involvement must be represented at the grassroots level, planning and decision-making.

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