

Institute of Social Informatics and Technological Innovations

The Role of Local Community's Perspective in Positioning of Rural Tourism Destinations

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The Role of Local Community's Perspective in Positioning of Rural Tourism Destinations

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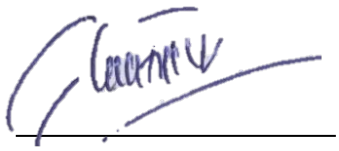
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citation, which have been duly acknowledged. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

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ABSTRACT

Tourism in rural destinations should only be considered successful if it is according to the local communities' perspective and they have some measure of control over tourism development. The traditional way of positioning a tourism product is mainly focused on two factors, product attributes (as perceived by the strategy planners) and consumer expectations, while the role and perspective of local community are often ignored. Nature, cultural heritage, local knowledge and authentic rural experience and hospitality are amongst the main touristic attractions that are directly related to the local community. Hence to design and develop a destination image and position strategy, tourism planners can leverage on local communities knowledge of their place and locality. This study explores the relationship between local community's perspectives and their perceived positioning of rural tourism destinations. A quantitative survey was conducted to obtain the data from the local communities in selected research communities in Sarawak, Malaysia. Twenty-five hypothesized relationships were tested and thirteen hypotheses were supported. This study have revealed various findings regarding positioning a rural destination and residents perspective about tourism in their place. It shows the various reasons that drive local community to support and share their natural and cultural assets with tourists. This can further help government and tourism officials to understand and address key factors to improve local community overall attitude behind their perceived positioning on a particular attribute. Further government can allocate funds for the capacity building of the local community to feel confident and prepare them to face the day-to-day challenges coming with tourism developments. Moreover, the findings imply the importance of residents' perspective and suggest that a successful destination branding is not achievable without the proper inclusion of its local residents, their motivation

to support and develop tourism, overall knowledge about local products and attractions, attachment to their community and also the local infrastructure. Considering local communities' perspective would help to promote the uniqueness of each community in implementing the positioning strategies, otherwise it will lose its uniqueness that can be the unique selling propositions for a particular destination.

Keywords: Positioning, rural tourism, local community's perspective, rural development, tourism strategies, community based rural tourism.

Peranan Perspektif Komuniti Tempatan dalam Memposisikan Destinasi Pelancongan di Kawasan Pedalaman

ABSTRAK

Industri pelancongan di luar bandar hanya boleh dianggap berjaya jika ia mengikut perspektif masyarakat tempatan dan mereka mempunyai beberapa kawalan ke atas pembangunan pelancongan. Cara tradisional untuk meletakkan produk pelancongan bergantung kepada dua faktor iaitu atribut produk (seperti yang dilihat oleh para perancang strategi) dan jangkaan pengguna, manakala peranan dan perspektif komuniti setempat sering diabaikan. Antara tarikan utama pelancongan yang berkait langsung dengan komuniti setempat adalah alam semula jadi, warisan budaya, pengetahuan tempatan dan pengalaman luar bandar yang sebenar serta hospitaliti. Oleh itu untuk merangka dan membangunkan sesuatu imej destinasi dan stategi kedudukan, para perancang pelancongan boleh memanfaatkan pengetahuan komuniti tempatan berkaitan tempat dan kawasan mereka. Kajian ini menerokai hubungan antara perspektif komuniti setempat dan tanggapan mereka mengenai kedudukan destinasi pelancongan luar bandar. Satu kajian kuantitatif telah dijalankan untuk memperolehi data daripada komuniti setempat di tapak penyelidikan yang dipilih di Sarawak, Malaysia. Sebanyak dua puluh lima hubungan hipotesis telah diuji dan tiga hipotesis telah disokong. Kajian ini telah mendedahkan pelbagai penemuan mengenai kedudukan destinasi luar bandar dan perspektif penduduk tentang pelancongan di tempat mereka. Ia menunjukkan pelbagai sebab yang mendorong komuniti setempat untuk menyokong dan berkongsi aset semulajadi dan budaya mereka dengan pelancong. Ini juga seterusnya dapat membantu kerajaan dan pegawai pelancongan untuk memahami dan menangani faktor-faktor penting untuk memperbaiki sikap keseluruhan komuniti di sebalik

tanggapan mereka mengenai atribut tertentu. Selanjutnya kerajaan dapat memperuntukkan dana untuk pembangunan kapasiti komuniti setempat untuk merasa yakin dan mempersiapkan mereka menghadapi cabaran hari yang mendatang dalam perkembangan pelancongan. Selain itu, penemuan tersebut mengimplikasikan kepentingan perspektif penduduk dan mencadangkan kejayaan penjenamaan destinasi tidak boleh dicapai tanpa penglibatan yang sewajarnya oleh komuniti setempat, motivasi mereka untuk menyokong dan membangunkan pelancongan, pengetahuan secara menyeluruh mengenai produk dan tarikan tempatan, hubungan dengan komuniti mereka dan juga infrastruktur tempatan. Memandangkan perspektif komuniti setempat akan membantu mempromosikan keunikan setiap komuniti dalam melaksanakan strategi kedudukan, jika tidak, ia akan hilang keunikannya yang boleh menjadi kebolehjualan bagi destinasi tertentu.

Kata kunci: *Kedudukan, pelancongan desa, perspektif masyarakat tempatan, pembangunan luar bandar, strategi pelancongan, pelancongan luar bandar berdasarkan komuniti.*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Rural tourism development and local community participation have recently become vital themes in tourism research. Very little research has been conducted on the positioning of rural tourism and the relationship between positioning and the local community's perspective, particularly in developing countries like Malaysia. Past research mostly investigated the context of tourism consumption (i.e., the tourist's perspective), yet undermined the context of tourism production (i.e., the local community's perspective) in the positioning of a tourist destination. The local community's perspective of tourism influences their support for tourism development, which in turn affects their perceptions of a tourism destination. The main intention of this research is to provide a general overview of the background of the research study, and to provide a context of research problem. The discussions in this chapter are divided into sections as follows; first section is the background of the study, with focus on rural tourism from Malaysian scenario. Second section concerns the research problem with the rural destinations followed by the main research questions to be considered in this study. Next section defines the main objectives to be covered in this research and main definitions used in the study. The main contributions of the research study and structure of the thesis has been explained in the last section.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Tourism

Tourism is defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as the activity of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (WTTC, 2014). Tourism comprises most short-term travel away from a person's normal place of work or residence and includes not just holiday, leisure and recreational travel, but also travel for the purposes of visiting friends and relatives, business, education, religious, health or other reasons.

The tourism industry has become a crucial engine of the global economy; tourism is ranked the second highest revenue-generating industry worldwide (Ranga, 2016). According to the UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, income generated through tourism related expenditures, such as food and drink, accommodation, shopping, and other services, reached an estimated US$ 1,232 billion. International tourist arrivals increased by 4.4% in 2015. Tourism contributes to 9% of the global GDP, and is estimated to generate an average of 1 in 11 jobs globally (WTTC, 2011; UNWTO, 2016). A place with attractive landscape, culture, history and adequate infrastructure can become choice for tourists. Cities are the most important component of entertainment, social and cultural tourism in Asia, Europe and Africa. Although some cities have been receiving visitors for a long time, urban tourism really started to emerge in the 1990s (García-Hernández, Calle-Vaquero, & Yubero, 2017). During these

years, tourism flows increased, tourism took on a high-profile role on the urban agenda and tourism research.

1.2.2 Rural Tourism

Tourism has become an equal, active and dominant agent of change and control in the rural communities, where there are inadequate choices for economic development (Daneshpour & Pajouh, 2014). Rural communities are primarily dependent on traditional means of earning an income, such as cash crops or livestock. Tourism is considered an alternate option for economic sustainability in deprived regions (Othman, Sazali, & Mohamed, 2013). Rural tourism is a fastest growing businesses and accounts for foreign exchange receipts and export earnings (Tang & Tan, 2015). It is regarded as one of the few activities that can benefit local communities, as it utilizes local resources to increase business, revitalization of local crafts, and assists social development, without investing much. Tourism helps to boost the rural economy, and provides opportunities to rural communities to directly benefit by leveraging on value-added economic channel for local produce (Park & Yoon, 2009). Tourism can be harnessed as a strategy for rural development, thus rural recreation and tourism are now widely explored. Rural tourism is promoted as an alternate means to reduce the socio-economic gaps between urban and rural areas (Liu, 2006).

With the progression of domestic economy and living standards, the pleasant climate in rural areas and the countryside scenery has become an increasing choice for recreation and vacation (Zhang, Wang, & Zhao, 2014). Tourists wish to experience a relaxed and healthy lifestyle, which is promised by rural destinations. The tourist's inclination towards novelty,

culture, history, adventure, heritage and interaction with local people creates awareness and governments are now concerned to develop rural tourism destinations. Rural tourism is a new trend in tourism and constitutes an alternative to traditional mass tourism (Alina, 2015).

1.2.3 Positioning of Rural Tourism

Tourism development and an increased participation of tourists at the global level have amplified the number of tourist destinations. There is high competition to grab the larger share of international and domestic tourists (Chon, Uysal, Fesenmaier, & O'Leary, 2014). This has led to governments funding tourism sites, to augment the image of the destination and make it more appealing to tourists (Sumaco & Richardson, 2011). Rural tourist destinations face the need to create specific promotional activities. Positioning has been used as one of the tools to set a destination apart from other destinations. Positioning is defined as an activity of creating a brand offer, in such a manner that it occupies a distinctive place and value in the targeted customer's mind (Li & Zhang, 2011). Branding and positioning are crucial in any businesses as they have an impact on the customer's choice (Lopes, 2011). However, the strategies for positioning rural tourism destinations have often overlooked local community's perspectives and paid more attention to the tourist's perspectives (Achieng, Hayombe, & Agong, 2014). Traditionally tourism policies/strategies consisted of two essential components: origin and destination (Morachat, 2003). *Origin* is considered as tourism demand and *destination* represents tourism supply, which includes natural resources, cultural and historical attractions and its people. In preparing a tourism plan, importance should be given to both components.

Studies on tourism destination positioning from tourist's perspective are abundant (such as Chaudhary, 2000; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Ryan & Cave, 2005; Hernández-Lobato, Solis-Radilla, Moliner-Tena, & Sánchez-García, 2006; Govers, Go, & Kumar, 2007; Chi & Qu, 2008; Frochot & Kreziak, 2008; Badaruddin, 2009; Pan & Li, 2011; Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011; Hidalgo Alcázar, Sicilia Piñero, & Ruiz de Maya, 2014; Hwang, Park, Hunter, & Kim, 2014). These studies elaborate in detail the concerns and choices of tourists regarding a tourism destination. Indeed, a good understanding of perceived importance of destination helps tourism planners identify a location's strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, the data acquired from tourist's perspective provides critical insights into potential customers for a particular market segment. However, researchers also highlighted the need to explore and address the local community's perspective in planning and management, especially when local resources are being used for tourism.

Thus far, very little work has been done to address the role of the local community's perspective in tourism planning and the positioning of rural tourism destinations. The traditional way of positioning a product focuses on product attributes (as perceived by the strategy planners), as well as consumer expectations and their perceptions (Lhotáková & Klosová, 2009). As indicated above, the development of tourist attractions, tourism policies, and destination marketing are mostly based on the needs and interests of the tourists. In the process of positioning rural tourism products, the role and perspective of the local community is often ignored. Liu (2006) argues that ignoring local perspectives results in a lack of interest by local communities, which ultimately results in losing local culture, as well as dissatisfied residents and tourists. This often leads to unsustainable and inauthentic tourism services,

which fail to harness the local community's diversity, uniqueness, and commitments. The local community's perspective is important, as for tourists the appeal of rural areas lies mainly in the heritage, nature, culture, local knowledge, and most importantly natural hospitality of the local people (Rid, Ezeuduji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014).

According to Melin (1999), the main condition for implementing a successful positioning is, making a detailed analysis and by that recognising the most important attributes to bring brand prominent benefits. Effective destination positioning themes must be developed based on features that are well explored and meaningful to the target market (Pike, 2012). Essentially, the consideration of both internal and external factors in a rural detination is important in rural tourism, such as local culture, traditions and surrounding environment etc. Tourist destinations can be positioned on a variety of dimensions, such as the needs they satisfy, the benefits they deliver, specific destination features, when and how they are used, or who uses them (Brito & Pratas, 2015). Common and attractive features of rural tourism destinations are well known; these include nature, climate, and flora and fauna. However, Stetic (2012) highlights the issue of unfamiliarity to local and "true attributes of rural destination" which results in inadequate construction of rural tourism destination. At this point a useful approach can be made to positioning a rural tourism destination according to local community's concerns and views, which is the least researched area in tourism field. The lack of the local community's involvement in tourism plans is a less emphasised theme in tourism research (McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Brida, Osti, & Faccioli, 2011).

In previous studies, destination positioning has been researched extensively (Seongseop Kim, Chun, & Petrick, 2005; Tkaczynski, Hastings, & Beaumont, 2006; Pike, 2012; Mohamad et al., 2013; Prayag & Hosany, 2014; Rid, Ezeuduji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014). However, review of these studies reveals existing approaches to study positioning of tourism destinations are bound within a limited domain of demand side and have yet to be extended to the realm of integrating local communities' perspective. The same arguments have been also supported by (MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003; Lo, Mohamad, Songan, & Yeo, 2012a; Lo, Mohamad, Songan, & Yeo, 2012b).

This research was conducted to integrate the community's perspective into positioning of rural tourism destination. This is also in line with the study by Hwang et al., (2014) that the development of tourism destination should begin with an understanding of resident subjectivities, as they are aware of their role as stakeholders. This study aims to examine the community's views, expectations, and other concerns on the development of rural tourism industry, not only collectively but also individually.

1.3 Malaysian Scenario

Malaysia regards tourism as a very important sector, which brings the much-needed foreign exchange, new jobs, and businesses to the nation (Nair, Munikrishnan, Rajaratnam, & King, 2015). The tourism sector in Malaysia is the third largest revenue generating industry, after oil/gas and manufacturing sectors (Lo et al., 2012). To balance economic equity in Malaysia, the New Economic Policy (NEP, 1971) provided a set of strategies to the federal government for two decades (Liu, 2006). The policy highlighted the need of indigenous access and control

in tourism planning as a key objective. In the following years (1980s) the government's agenda for tourism development placed greater emphasis on the representation of native Malays in the tourism industry (Musa, 2000). Rural tourism per se has existed for a long time in Malaysia, due to the location of various nature and culture based tourism attractions. In 7th Malaysian Plan (1996-2000), rural tourism was introduced as a new form of tourism along with nature based tourism and community-based tourism (EPU, 1996). Further, it has received more recognition as a tourism product with the launching of the Rural Tourism Master Plan in 2001 (Ibrahim & Razzaq, 2010). The development of a strong platform around the concept of rural tourism is useful for a multicultural country like Malaysia, where almost 25% of its people reside in rural areas (World Bank, 2014). Malaysia has been recognized as one of the best eco-tourism destinations in the region (Nair, Mohamed, & Lo, 2015). According to the 11th Malaysia Plan, Malaysia continued to be one of the world's leading tourist destinations, with an increase in the number of tourist from 24.6 million in 2010 to 27.4 million in 2014. Tourism remained an important source of foreign exchange; tourism brought in approximately RM 72 billion in 2014, which is an increase of 27.4% from 2010 (EPU, 2015). In 2011, RM 15.74 million was generated from the homestay programme, which is among the most popular rural tourism offerings in Malaysia (Nair, Uma Thevi, Rajaratnam, & King, 2015).

To enhance the distinct appeal of Malaysian tourism products and services, the government continued to promote the country's traditional advantages, such as their cultural and natural heritage that propagated the popularity of destinations (e.g., Melaka, Pulau Pinang, Sabah, and Sarawak). In an effort to position Malaysia as a premier tourist destination in the region,

promotional and marketing activities were intensified by the government in collaboration with the private sector and local communities. By utilizing its natural and historic resources, together with the diverse multicultural ethnic society, Malaysia has great potential to present its unique position in the global market. Ideally, development of tourism in rural areas based on essential characteristics and available resources of a particular destination such as natural environment, local culture and native system of land use. Malaysia should capitalize on these attributes when promoting at an international level, and position itself as a cultural and nature-based tourism destination (Mohamad, et al., 2013). Nature and culture become tourist attractions and also gives a sound argument for the preservation of a given region (McKercher et al., 2005). However, any development directly affects the community, which can largely determine the success and failure of the tourism development efforts (Knollenberg, 2011).

Malaysia has to face tough competition from its ASEAN (Associate of South East Asian Nations) neighbours that also consider tourism as an important contributing sector to their economy (Mohamed, 2009). The positioning of tourism destination based on a unique and attractive image is essential to get a higher share in the international tourist's receipts in the global market. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the main problem faced by the tourism industry in Malaysia is the lack of a clear destination image (Mohamad, Ali, & Ghani, 2011). Successful destination branding is dependent on both the tourist demands and the local community's perspective (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011). Equally, the tourist's perceived image has significant importance for a tourist destination; these are crucial to a destination's marketing success. Previous studies have discussed the significant relationship between destination images and tourist's emotional stance and satisfaction, which

affect destination loyalty and the tourist's future behavioural intentions (Coban, 2012; Mohamad, Abdullah & Mokhlis, 2012; Prayag, 2012). Based on the demand, a tourism destination needs to create specific promotional activities and a specific image for each selected market. Tourists are attracted towards rural heritage, nature, culture, local knowledge, and natural hospitality of the local people. Hence, to create unique selling propositions and potential tourism products for a destination, the tourism planners can leverage on local communities knowledge of their surroundings. This also helps promote local community participation. This integrated approach towards tourism development ultimately results in equal benefits for all stakeholders and gives the local communities a sense of ownership in the development of projects (Razzaq et al., 2011; Maneenetr, Naipinit, & Tran, 2014;). To provide a competitive edge to the rural tourism industry in Malaysia, resources need to be managed in a way that both economic and social needs are fulfilled for all stakeholders; this means including the local community while retaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (Berno & Bricker, 2001). This further involves careful monitoring of the tourist satisfaction level, the local community's capacity building, and continually monitoring the community' reactions to tourism activities and tourists.

Johari, Ramachandran, Shuib and Herman (2015) highlighted the lack of involvement of the local community in decisions regarding tourism programs in Malaysia. The local communities are supportive of tourism, yet have also requested to be considered as equal partners in decision making, especially when it comes to tourism activities in their locality (Johari et al., 2015). Considering the potential cascading effect that local communities can

have on the tourist destinations, previous research may have underestimated the impact of the community's power on destination image. Thus, when promoting tourism destinations, positioning strategies for the targeted areas should emphasize the community's perspective. Promoting active and meaningful involvement of communities during planning as well as on the operating level will ensure growth of tourism destinations. Their active involvement will lead to positive attitudes and strong support; this in turn will positively affect their perspective towards tourism.

1.4 Problem Statement

Traditionally, tourism is dictated by the external stakeholders, such as the government and tourism industry, who focus mainly on the interests of the tourists. The perspective of the local community is often ignored when positioning a tourism destination (Tosun, 2000; Buckley, 2012; Chin, 2015). According to Zhang, Yamamura, and Fujiki (2013), this 'outside-in' approach is quite evident in contemporary tourism.

Exclusion of local perspectives results in poor positioning, that causes a weak image of a destination, similarities with already present destination images, and unfair competition with other destinations. Furthermore, there could be damages to tangible and intangible resources, that instigates negative impacts of tourism on local destination, such as the stereotypical images of indigenous people for the marketing purposes represent the false expectations to the tourists as well as the wrong perception about the host communities (Mroczek, 2016). Fuchs and Diamantopoulos (2010) also warn that choosing the wrong positioning, which are not perceived as being important by consumers and do not sufficiently differentiate the brand

from its competitors, take the risk of harming the perceived positioning, resulting in a compromise or even a failure of the overall positioning. In rural tourism, the local community's concerns need to be properly addressed so they are willing to share their social, cultural, and natural resources with the tourists (Lee, 2013; Ahmad et al., 2014). Further to emphasize the importance of local participation Hicks et al., (2016) highlighted that tracking only economic growth when considering tourism positioning has been harmful to social and environmental progress in the destinations.

Tourism is one of the largest economic and growth industries in the world and has been one of the largest contributors towards Malaysian GDP over the last three decades (Amir, Osman, Bachok, & Ibrahim, 2015). However, due to geographical proximity and cultural similarity in ASEAN, Malaysia is facing problem to position its tourism products in the region (Badaruddin, 2009). Past researchers have elucidated the main challenges faced by Malaysia tourism industry is image (Phang, Liew, Cheuk, & Razli, 2009; Mohamad, Ali, & Ghani, 2011). To counter this challenge, the conventional approaches of positioning strategies have been used that mainly focused on two factors, product attributes (as perceived by the strategy planners) and consumer expectations and perceptions (Lhotáková and Klosová, 2009). Whereas developing positioning strategy for a rural tourism destination, the focus is on the true character and values of a site, the links with the past and aesthetic values that are better known to its residence (Stetic, 2012).

Highlighting this issue in Sarawak, Malaysia, Johari et al., (2015) have analysed the role of one of the indigenous community, Bidayuh, in tourism development. Their study have also

highlighted lack of local community involvement in main decision making of tourism programs as an issue in Malaysia tourism industry. Further it also explored that local communities are supportive to tourism industry and in return they also demand to be considered as equal partners with the government in decision making for their community and tourism activities in their locality (Harris, 2009; Johari et al., 2015).

Previous research has thoroughly studied tourist's perspectives on important attributes of a destination image, such as the environment (Stetic, 2012), social and cultural activities (Ibrahim & Razzaq, 2010), entertainment (Guo & Sun, 2016), authentic rural experiences (Rid et al., 2014), and learning (Simonsen, 2005). These studies highlighted the tourist's concerns and choices, which help direct the attention of tourism planners towards the strengths and weaknesses of a tourism location. However, researchers (such as Okazaki, 2008; Lee, 2013; Hatipoglu, Alvarez, & Ertuna, 2016; Swanson, & DeVereaux, 2017) also mentioned the need to explore and address the local community's perspective in planning and management. Sonnleitner (2011) and Stetic (2012) equally emphasized careful analysis of destination attributes and characteristics of the target market. They argue that it is the local community who can better inform positioning strategies on the tourism destination attributes.

Thus, the literature describes numerous benefits of incorporating the local community; however, it also shows that this was undermined in previous research. Bringing this into focus, the current research explores the relationship between the local community's perspective and positioning of a tourism destination.

1.5 Research Questions

The primary purpose of the current research is to explore the perceived positioning of a rural tourism destination by a local community. We set out to answer the following question:

Does the local community's perspective about tourism (i.e., motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, and infrastructure) affect their perceived positioning of rural tourism (i.e., environmental, social, cultural, entertainment, and learning attributes, as well as an authentic rural experience) in Sarawak Malaysia?

1.6 Research Objectives

This study has divided the objectives into two groups, general objectives and specific objectives, and a description of each follows.

1.6.1 General Objectives

The general objective of the current research is to determine the local community's perspective on positioning rural tourism in Malaysia. This information will help to develop a conceptual framework that determines the relationship between destination image and attributes that influence the community's perspective and support for rural tourism. Specifically, this research pursues the following objectives:

a. To critically examine the local community's perspective (i.e., motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, and infrastructure) towards the positioning of rural tourism destinations, which have previously been overlooked.
b. To thoroughly investigate the perceived positioning of tourism destinations (i.e., environmental, social, cultural, entertainment, and learning attributes, as well as the authentic rural experience) by the rural community.

The current research attempts to establish an empirical relationship between the local community's perspective and the positioning of their place as a rural tourism destination. Thus, it helps to give insight to tourism stakeholders to understand local perspective before planning and implementing any development plan. Because any plan developed for rural areas and particularly for indigenous community cannot be successful unless it is completely in line with the local people views and concerns.

1.7 Significance of the Research

The current research contributes to several important aspects within tourism. First, it contributes to the field of tourism planning and tourism marketing, by creating a conceptual framework that integrates the community's perspective in positioning of a rural tourism destination. The current research also aimed to provide empirical support for the relationship between local perspectives and positioning of a rural destination, as well as offering theoretical and practical contributions thereof.

Moreover, the current research adds to a better understanding of the influencing factors on rural tourism positioning strategies. The community perspective will define to what extent the local community is willing to have tourism development in their locality and how ready and motivated they are to interact with the tourists coming from diverse cultures. At the same time, this research also explores the important factors for local community participation in the rural tourism development processes.

The proposed conceptual framework deveopled for this study examine relationship between local communities perspective and their perceived positioning of rural tourism destination. To get the results of the intended study, this conceptual framework will be applied in selected rural communities in Sarawak, Malaysia. The findings will particularly be helpful for Sarawak rural tourism as it provides insights into some of the conditions that enable rural tourism to foster desirable community development outcomes alongwith promoting their unique culture. The findings of this investigation also complement those of earlier studies in tourism management and planning in rural communities. After this, it can be applied further to other rural tourism destinations where a positioning strategy in needed to develop by adopting local community's perspective. As mentioned earlier, the amount of research regarding community perspectives, particularly in rural Malaysia, is very limited. Thus, the current research intended to expand the existing body of knowledge in this area, i.e., positioning strategies for rural tourism through integrating community participation in this process especially in the context of developing countries. Regarding the practical implication, the current research explored the potential strength and weaknesses of the current positioning of specific rural destinations in Malaysia. This information will be helpful and important to

relating government institutions, policy makers, and other stakeholders, enabling them to make successful plans to upgrade the quality of life in rural areas.

Furthermore, the research will contribute to the creation of more effective images of rural tourism destinations. Local communities, which are exploring tourism as a vital source of income and job creation, will learn how to strive in the tourism business; they will also be able to expand government policies to make the environment supportive for rural tourism. The current research will develop the understanding of local concerns for rural tourism development and ultimately provide important implications for tourism researchers, tourism planners and managers alike.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The scope of this research focused on the investigation of the perspective of the local community, and their relationship with positioning strategies for rural tourism. The current research was conducted in selected rural tourism destinations within Borneo Island, Sarawak, Malaysia. Sarawak boast natural beauty, with many rural areas that are rich in natural and cultural traditional elements. Sarawak has more than 40 sub-ethnic groups, each with its own distinct language, culture, and lifestyle. Thus all these reasons make it a popular choice for tourists who wish to go to rural areas and also an ideal place to conduct a study that mainly focuses on rural communities. The scope of this research is focused on the exploration of the perspective of local stakeholders that is community, the impact they receive from tourism activities and their relationship with positioning strategy for rural tourism. This study will limit its scope to seven rural tourism destinations were selected, namely, Annah Rais

Kampung, Batang Sadong, Bako National Park, Gunung Gading, Sematan, Batang Lupar Sri Aman, and Rumah Patrick Homestay in Miri. Data was collected only from community individuals who have lived in the rural tourism destinations for more than a year.

1.9 Organisation of the Chapters

There are five chapters in this thesis, organized in the following order. Chapter 1 provides the background information on rural tourism, the scenario of Malaysian rural tourism, the research problem, main objectives, questions, definition of key terms, contribution and scope of the underlined study. Chapter 2 reviews theoretical perspective and conceptual debates on the development of rural tourism strategies, particularly in rural Malaysia, the relevant literature and highlights the gaps in the literature on analyzing positioning strategies from local community perspective. It also proposes theoretical framework and develops a set of research hypotheses. Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology adopted for the study. It also describes the research methods, sample design, sampling process, research instrument to be used and appropriate statistical analysis to achieve outlined objectives of the study. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of data collection for the study and verification of the formulated hypotheses. Chapter 5 presents the discussion of the significant findings, followed by justification for the direct and indirect results. Last Chapter 6 discusses the limitations of the study, implications and some suggestions for future research.

1.10 Summary

Tourism destination positioning is becoming more and more important in tourism marketing organizations as they try to reach out to new customers. As competition becomes harder for all destinations, it is vital to have that little bit extra that makes you different from your competitors. Thus, the purpose of this research is to provide a better understanding of an organization's brand identity. Specifically, the research explores the relationship between local community's perspectives and their perceived positioning of rural tourism destinations. This extends the potential knowledge gained, regarding the weaknesses and strengths of a tourism destination.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature discussing rural tourism development, positioning of rural tourism and relationship between local community's perspective and positioning rural tourism destinations in Malaysian context. To review the theoretical perspectives and conceptual debates of tourism development, this chapter divide the discussion into following sections. The first section describes the background of rural tourism in Malaysia. It explains the gradual development of tourism in rural areas, government initiatives and focus on tourism as a mean to upgrade standard of life in rural communities. The following section will elaborate basic concepts on positioning in the context of tourism. Next section will describe literature review on positioning rural tourism destinations as perceived by local communities. Then further, next part will focus on antecedent of communities' perspective and positioning rural tourism products in Malaysia followed by underline research theory to support the current study. Next section of the chapter will develop framework for the study, which will demonstrate the relationship between dependent and independent variables followed by discussing current problem in the rural tourism development and positioning strategies from community's perspective, by finding the gaps in literature. Further this section will briefly elaborate variables in framework and hypothesis will be formulated with the help of the previous literature. Justification for the study and conclusion will be the last part of the chapter.

2.2 Rural Tourism

Tourism is ever becoming one of the fastest growing industries in the world (Tang & Tan, 2015); it improves the economic growth, giving indirectly and directly impacts to the infrastructure and progress of local economies (Schubert, Brida, & Risso, 2011). In the last decade, tourism trends have shifted from standardised mass tourism to more individualistic forms, in which nature based tourism or rural holiday have gained prominence (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004; Ahmad, Jabeen, & Khan, 2014). At its best, rural tourism combines the features of a simple traditional rural life, knowledge about agriculture, history, getting closer to nature, and experiencing authentic local cultures by living among the local people for a more enriching tourism experience (Rid, Ezeuduji & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014). Tourists now seek opportunities for authentic and unique experiences associated with rural areas and their distinct cultural, heritage, ethnic, and recreational activities and natural landscapes. Such local features have become vital to successfully attract tourists, who are delirious of the peaceful tranquillity of the countryside (Stolarick, Denstedt, Donald & Spencer, 2010).

Rural communities are slowly adopting new alternative income strategies, by using their local cultural and natural resources. Tourism has been considered a vehicle of economic development, and a successful source of income and employment particularly in rural areas (Prabhakaran, Nair, & Ramachandran, 2014; Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004). Furthermore, rural tourism does not require high maintenance costs, compared to other business sectors such as manufacturing. Rural tourism draws upon existing rural resources and can lead to a secondary income for local people (Othman, 2013). As rural tourism can be developed with

existing local resources and the support from local government and small businesses, it is not so dependent on outside means (Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier, & Van Es, 2001). Due to the benefits it offers to the host community, the land and the tourist, rural tourism is experiencing a strong expansion in last few decades (San Martín & Herrero, 2012).

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP; 2011) highlighted the vigorously and rapid increase in the tourism industry in Asia and the Pacific in the last few years. The revival in economic growth and international trade has resulted in an increase in the demand for business travel. According to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) strategic planning (2012), with the rise of the middle class income, Asian travellers have become more adventurous and are now exploring places that were once the preserve of the backpackers and action seeking Europeans. Furthermore, the reformation of the rural agricultural sector and the migration of higher educated youth to urban areas, has led to the increased adoption of rural tourism as an alternative development approach for economic and social regeneration (Liu, 2006). Tourism contributes to cultural preservation, economic development, and sustainability of rural communities (Baležentis, Kriščiukaitienė, Baležentis, & Garland, 2012). Rural tourism also establishes a unique opportunity for tourism operators to create linkages between different tourism service providers; they can plan in such a way that is boosts different opportunities and offer a diverse range of tourist activities (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004).

Rural tourism provides opportunities for the interaction between locals and tourists, which makes it unique from any other kind of tourism development products. Furthermore, it also

places a strong emphasis on contact with and awareness of environmental conservation for both tourists and communities (Spencer & Nsiah, 2013). Murphy (2013) describes rural tourism as a sociocultural experience for both the tourist and the local community. The expansion of tourism to an international level has increased the connection among different groups and cultures (Knollenberg, 2011). To some, this contact threatens to destroy local traditional structures of cultures and societies, while to others it just represents an opportunity for seeking peace, develop understanding, and getting knowledge from different societies and nations (Sharpley, 2014). However, there has been an obvious increase in the number of domestic and international tourists travelling for the purpose of experiencing another culture. This growing trend has also influenced rural communities to use their natural resources and traditional way of life to earn an additional income (Kunasekaran, Gill, & Redzuan, 2013) when other traditional economic sectors are falling slowly.

However, rural tourism is not just about earning an income for the local people, they also intend to promote their community, preserve their culture, and to meet people from various cultural backgrounds (Liu, 2006; Wang & Pfister, 2008; Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). Studies have shown that this type of tourism can deliver many benefits to host community by sharing their culture as a tourism attraction and as well as to those tourists visiting those communities (Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002). Furthermore, communities may also benefit in the form of reciprocity, community pride, tolerance, and a stronger sense of ethnic identity (Sher, Bagul, & Din, (2015). These factors motivate the local community to participate and support rural tourism activities.

2.1.1 Definition of Rural Tourism

Defining rural tourism has been the subject of increasing debates in the literature with no agreed definition (Bramwell, 1994; Oppermann, 1996; Su, 2011). Indeed, the concept of rural tourism varies enormously between countries as different parameters are used to define the term 'rural' as well as 'rural tourism'. Development organisations, researchers, and government agencies from different countries have developed their own definitions of rural tourism based on their unique experiences or contexts (Marzuki, Ali, & Othman, 2010). According to Aref and Gill (2009) tourism that (1) portrays the rural life, art, culture, and heritage at rural locations, (2) helps the local community to earn income, and (3) enables interactions between the tourists and the locals for a more inspiring tourism experience, can be classified as rural tourism.

Whereas Gopal, Varma, and Gopinathan (2008) describe rural tourist destinations as a "wider area dominated by the natural and/or farmed/forested environments where specific natural, economic and socio-cultural features, such as tradition, local cooperation, trust and reciprocity are harmoniously embedded and as such create a unique tourist product that is predominantly small scaled, nature friendly, ethno-cultured, in other words sustainable". Negrusa, Cosma, and Bota, (2007) simply state that rural tourism is offered by people from rural areas, with accommodation on small-scale and with the implication of important components of their rural activities and customs of their daily life. However the mentioned definitions have partly addressed the issues and concerns related with rural communities and rural tourism. These definitions merely talk about the place and its attractions to attract visitors and lacks the issues like empowerment of local communities and sustainability of the local resources, on which

tourism is based. In Malaysia, the current official definition of rural tourism is also rather vague and mainly focuses on homestay programmes in rural areas. With reference to the main objective of this research, which is more focused on rural communities's perspective about their place and perceived positioning, this research follows the definition developed by Nair et al., (2015). This definition support rural communities concerns and rights and also includes the important stakeholders such as rural communities, tourism business officials and government. Nair et al., (2015) state that "rural tourism is functionally rural and provides the opportunity for tourists to directly involve, experience, enjoy and learn the unique cultural, natural and historical attractions and activities provided by the local communities in rural areas, with cooperation from the government and businesses in order to provide socio-economic benefits without exploiting the environment."

2.1.2 Diversity of Rural Tourism

Rural tourism is a diversified sector, which that covers a variety of adventure-oriented activities, an unspoiled/natural environment, wilderness, rural lifestyle and so forth. It is the combination of environment, unique experiences and traveller's expectations that make rural tourism a separate and identifiable phenomenon (Cawley & Gilmor, 2008). The rural tourism includes a range of tourism products. Below are some of the more common products of rural tourism.

2.1.2.1 Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism refers to leisure traveling, with the purpose of experiencing historical places and activities (Braithwaite & Lee, 2008). Wang and Bramwell (2011) pointed out that historic resources can be facilitated the revenue towards community and country's economic growth particularly through tourism. Weaver (2012) indicated that the local communities' heritage inventories would be including the site of coverage. Governments are keen to use heritage resources as a platform for encouraging tourism activities, particularly in the rural areas (Laing, Wheeler, Reeves, & Frost, 2014).

2.1.2.2 Agritourism

According to Sharpley and Sharpley (1997), "tourism products which are directly connected with the agrarian environment, agrarian products or agrarian stays are called agritourism". Agritourism involves any activities that were developed on a farm with the purpose of attracting visitors (Barbieri & Mshenga, 2008). These activities include farmers' markets, roadside stands, overnight farm or ranch stays, agriculture-related festivals, museums, and other such attractions. Agritourism is also known as agro-tourism, farm tourism, and farm-based tourism (Phillip, Hunter, & Blackstock, 2010)

2.1.2.3 Classical Rural Tourism

As mentioned in earlier section, different definitions exist for defining rural tourism and the underline issue is the unclear definition of "rural area" and the inconsistent characteristics of

“rurality” (Simkova, 2007; Gopal, 2008). The World Tourism Organization refers to classical rural tourism “as a term used when rural culture is a key component of the product" (UNWTO, 2004). The purpose of this tourism form is to satisfy the traveller’s desire to see new places, to enjoy beautiful and diverse landscapes, to admire important architectonic accomplishments, to enrich his soul in museums of art and history.

2.1.2.4 Nature-Based Tourism

Nature-based tourism, also known as ecotourism or recreation-based tourism, refers to any activity that uses natural resources as a tourism attraction; tourists visit natural areas for the purpose of enjoying the scenery, including flora, fauna, and animal wildlife (Parker, 1993). Nature-based tourism can involve visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas; it promotes conservation, keeps the tourism impacts low, and provides socioeconomic involvement of the local population (EPU, 2001). It is a subset of sustainable tourism that focuses on protection and preservation of ecology and natural resources.

The relationship between rural tourism and other tourism forms practiced in the rural environment is extremely important, because it establishes the connections between natural, human, economic and social parameters, in order to insure all factors that lead to tourism growth and sustainable development.

2.1.3 Rural Tourism Development in Malaysian Context

Like many other countries in the region, Malaysia also perceived rural tourism as a tool to push the country's economic structure to achieve higher results (Akbar, Zahari, & Dusi, 2016). The government facilitates rural tourism development programs by specifying budgets, tourism policies, and related guidelines. Malaysia has diverse natural attractions and is considered very multicultural (Amran Hamzah, 2004). It is one of the region's key tourist destinations, offering excellent beaches and brilliant scenery (Nair, Mohamed, & Lo, 2015). Dense rainforests in the eastern states of Sarawak and Sabah, on the island of Borneo, are a refuge for wildlife and tribal traditions (Becker, 2015). It has a high potential for attracting tourists with diverse motivations, including those who wish to experience environmental uniqueness, harmonious countryside's, distinct adventure opportunities, and different cultural attractions. Rural tourism development has always been given an important role in the Malaysian national development program (Amir, Osman, Bachok, & Ibrahim, 2015). Many strategies and programmes were introduced to benefit rural people, to overcome problems such as poverty, low productivity, low income, lack of proper and adequate rural infrastructures, and the rural-urban disparity that existed prior to independence (Ngah, 2010).

The Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991 – 1995) recommended an increased emphasis on developing a more distinct image of Malaysia (EPU, 1991). Later in Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996 – 2000), rural tourism was identified as a new form of tourism worth pursuing, along with community-based tourism and nature-based tourism (EPU, 1996). To promote rural tourism and attract international tourists, a Rural Tourism Master Plan (RTMP) was formulated in July 2001 (Ibrahim & Razzaq, 2010) by the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Tourism and international

consultants from Tourism Development International (TDI) from Ireland, on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (TDI, 2000). The project team included experts in marketing research, strategic planning, sustainable development, institutional change, rural tourism, and island tourism. Extensive emphasis was placed on training and skill transferal; TDI provided residential training programmes for government officials, district officers, tourism operators, and community groups. TDI prepared a 5-year destination plan and product marketing strategy, positioning Malaysia as an outstanding eco-tourism/rainforest destination, focusing on the diverse nature and culture-based activities to attract international tourists. According to the RTMP, the strategic vision was to create a "new brand of tourist experience for visitors, particularly long stay/high spend visitors, featuring the attractive scenery of lush tropical landscape, presenting activities and amenities to participate in, and enjoy in safety and offering a smiling and friendly customer care approach" (Amran Hamzah, 2004).

In October 2011, the Minister of Tourism launched a national tourism strategy, the Malaysia Tourism Transformation Plan 2020 towards 36:168, at the World Tourism Conference in Kuala Lumpur. The '36:168' refers to the country's aim of attracting 36 million tourists and generating 168 billion MYR in annual tourism revenue by 2020.

The Malaysian government has intended to transform the country into a high-income nation by the year 2020 through an Economic Transformation Programme. ETP identifies 11 National Key Economic Areas (NKEAs), of which tourism is one (Pemandu, 2010; Wong, 2016). The Tourism NKEA has identified 12 Entry Point Projects (EPPs) within five

thematically different positioning strategies (Table 2.1). These positioning themes are affordable luxury, family fun, events and entertainment, business tourism, and nature adventures. Rural tourism falls under the theme of nature adventure (ETP, 2011; ETP, 2014).

Tourism in Malaysia not just focuses on attracting foreign tourists but also aims to focus on its small-scale tourism to follow changing tourism trends. With the number of government supported tourism programs, more and more rural communities are also joining tourism to increase their income. This will also helps to control the negative effects of mass tourism and to protect the fragile physical and social environment. To position Malaysia as one of the world's premium nature and ecotourism destinations, it needs to preserve, conserve, and enhance its natural biodiversity and eco-assets (ETP, 2012).

Table 2.1: Five themes divided into 12 EPPs (ETP, 2014; Wong, 2016)

Affordable Luxury (i.e. shopping)	**Family Fun**	**Events, Entertainment and Spa & Sports**	**Business Tourism**	**Nature Adventure**
• Duty free for wider range of goods • BB-KLCC as premier shopping district • 3 new premium outlets	• 1 new large integrated resort • Straits Riviera increase competitiveness in high-end cruise + urban redevelopment of port landing area	• Target more international events • Establish dedicated entertainment zones • Spa & sports (golf, angling)	• Establish Malaysia as a leading business tourism destination	• Malaysia as the preeminent global bio-diversity hub • Rainforest & marine discovery centers (together with park & garden) • New and enhanced live bio-diversity sites
• Connectivity (greater focus on medium connectivity to support growth) • Hotels (ensuring adequate supply with better mix, better rates)				

To achieve this goal, a comprehensive strategy is required that does not just focus on a high yield of tourists but also facilitates the regional development objectives and integrates the perspective of local stakeholders.

2.1.3.1 Malaysian Homestay Program

Malaysia rural tourism consists of different tourism products and activities. The diversity of attractions included heritage tourism or also called as cultural heritage tourism, nature-based tourism, research tourism (as proposed by Harris (2009) and agritourism. In the tourism business, the culture has become a major tourist attraction and also gives a strong argument for the preservation of a given region (McKercher et al., 2005). Therefore, the Malaysian government has introduced community-based homestay accommodation tourism as a new product (Ebrahimi & Khalifah, 2014). With homestay tourism, the tourist stays together with a host family and interacts with the local community for a reasonable charge. The homestay programme in Malaysia is gradually evolving into a mainstream tourism product, which is aggressively promoted by the government to revitalise the rural economy (Razzaq et al., 2011) and decentralize tourism income in rural communities (Bagul & Bahar, 2009). The homestay programme allows for an increased participation of the rural population in tourism-related activities and provides rural households the opportunity to supplement their income. In March 2014, 3,486 homestay operators from 170 villages throughout the country were trained and licensed by the Ministry of Tourism & Culture (MTPB, 2015). From January to November 2014, 67,490 international tourists visited homestay programmes; an increase of 10.5% from 2013 (MTPB, 2015). Sarawak has 35 homestay programmes in 32 villages with 419 operators, offering a total of 549 rooms in traditional individual houses or longhouses. In

April 2016, According to data obtained from the office of Sarawak Tourism Board, till April 2016 the number of homestays in Sarawak increased to 35 as described in the table below (Table 2.2.).

Table 2.2: Number of Homestays in Sarawak (Falak, Chiun, & Wee, 2016)

Division	**No. of Homestays Programs**
Miri	6
Limbang	3
Kota Samarahan	1
Serian	3
Seri Aman	1
Betong	1
Sarikei	1
Sibu	2
Kapit	1
Mukah	2
Kuching	14
Total	**35**

Tourism in Sarawak is among the places where tourism promotion and packaging is focused on the unique location, experiences, its people and their culture. In last few years, the increased desire for nature-based tourism has improved tourism activities in the rural areas of Sarawak. In the year 2013, Sarawak received an income of USD 654,966 through tourism and (USD 167, 472 in 2009) catered to about 47,140 tourists (Salleh et al., 2014). It is no doubt that homestay programme has become the iconic rural tourism product highlighting Malaysian cultural and traditional ways of life. However there is lack of attention on community-based tourism product with reference to the local perspective for the sustainability of natural resources. Further, any tourism projects initiated in rural communities also lack

awareness programs so as to educate rural communities about the project and to motivate them to participate.

2.3 The Concept of Positioning in Tourism

Positioning is the activity of creating a brand offer in such a manner that it occupies a distinctive place and value in the target customer's mind (Li & Zhang, 2011; Akin, 2017). The concept of positioning is rooted in private sector marketing and is applicable to a company, service person, a place, or a product (Chew, 2009; Trout & Ries, 2001). Positioning strategies relate brand attributes to particular target segments. The main concern behind an acute need positioning is to guarantee the continued presence of the brand in the consumers' consideration set, and keeping a good position in top-of-the-mind awareness (Brito & Pratas, 2015). Positioning is the image in the mind of the consumers that differentiate it from other competing brands in the same product category. Positioning starts with the product, but no changes are undertaken in the product itself; rather the name, the price, or the packaging of the product is altered to create a specific image in the consumers' minds (Ries & Trout, 2001).

According to Chacko (1996), positioning is a communication strategy that is the natural follow-through of market segmentation and target marketing. Positioning does not mean to create a completely new product but to make changes to the image what is already there in the mind of consumers. Ries and Trout (2001) describe three major eras in advertising industry: the product era (1950s), the image era (1960 - 70), and the positioning era (1970 – current). It

has become clear that in this new era, creativity is no longer a key to success; rather a company must create a *position* of the product in the consumers' minds.

In 1965, the Irish Tourist Board was the first tourism agency to base their marketing plan on the concept of positioning (Botha et al., 1999). Unique attributes of Ireland were identified held by potential visitors in key target markets. However, the identified attributes were not in a form that was commercially available to tourists. To bring its tourism attractions to the desired form, the Irish Tourist Board gave out grants to private companies to encourage them to develop these tourism products. The Board designed their packaging and marketing and thus this strategy launched the very successful Irish tourism industry.

Due to the highly competitive nature of tourism, many destinations have to worry about the increasing number of destinations and choices available to consumers (Pike, 2004; Stylos, Bellou, Andronikidis, & Vassiliadis, 2017). Notably, WTTC predicted that tourism would be expanding at the rate of 4% annually and supporting the employment of more than 300 million jobs by 2020 (WTTC, 2010). If this prediction is true, then destination positioning is increasingly important to maintain a flow of tourists; positioning can be used as an effective marketing strategy to stimulate the number of tourists (Sarma, 2003). Every destination needs to position itself with promotional messages that are carefully developed and clearly communicated. The positioning process should be concerned with three components: the segmentation decision (Morrison, 2002; Stetic, 2012; Gengler, & Mulvey, 2017), image (Pike, 2004; Fei et al., 2010), and emphasis on the destination's attributes (Kasim & Dzakiria, 2001; Kotler et al., 2003).

The first component i.e. segmentation decision is very crucial (Witt & Moutinho, 1989; Morrison, 2002). Gengler and Mulvey (2017) postulate that identifying which customers are willing to pay higher prices or demand a lower one is a crucial step in taking meaningful segmentation decisions. It can bring a firm to meet its objective, to develop suitable products for each target market and enhance market share by separating the target groups of customers from other customers (Jonker, Piersma, & Poel, 2004). Market segmentation is based on the concept of specific tourism destinations for specific types of tourists, and thus target market segments must be selected before tourism marketers can begin to entice the potential customers (Tsai & Chiu, 2004). The destination that focuses on the whole market (i.e., without segmentation) is usually met with many problems in wasted resources, unsatisfied customers, and missed strategic marketing opportunities (Bloom, 2004; Koc & Altinay, 2007).

The destination image (i.e., the second component) is a key construct in positioning theory (Pike, 2004; Fei et al., 2010). In tourism, destination image refers to the perception of a tourist destination by the target group (Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott, 2002; Sarma, 2003). Previous focus was directed at understanding the existing image of a destination in the mind of tourists (Pike, 2004; Ibrahim & Gill, 2005); however, recently the focus shifted towards creating a unique image that can distinguish and differentiate a destination from others.

The third important component is the selection of attributes that differentiate a destination from competitors. Positioning is a complex process that requires careful analysis on the attributes of a destination (Kasim & Dzakiria, 2001). It is concerned with the attempt to

modify the tangible characteristics and the intangible perception of a marketable offering in relation to the competition (Zhang, Lin, & Newman, 2016). Accordingly, Crompton et al., (1992) suggested that for effective positioning, the marketer has to research and identify the product attributes of a destination that determine the tourism product choice in target tourists' mind. Destinations need to be positioned on attributes that are; firstly meaningful to tourists, secondly display the destination's strength, and lastly can be fulfilled by tourism operators (Chandra & Menezes, 2001). Several authors had suggested that to build competitive advantage for a destination, destination marketers should select attributes by considering its resources and capabilities, and by understanding potential customers' demands (Rodriguez-Pinto, Rodriguez-Escudero, & Gutierrez-Cillan, 2008); this is referred to as an outside-in approach. This same line of thoughts was termed by (Kasim & Dzakiria, 2001).

The current study extends this concept to a new level where positioning considers the consumers' demands but equally address the needs and concerns of the tourism operators and local community. It can be supported by the fact argued by Gopal (2008) that the development of tourism in a rural area is not simply a matter of matching tourist demands with local product supply but also evaluating local suitability and acceptability. Creating a competitive market position is vital to long-term success (Chen & Uysal, 2002). In this regard, rural areas are blessed; they need very minimum changes to be made to their environment competitive for the tourism purpose (Weaver, 2012). Most of the rural communities including indigenous people are living with their traditions and cultures for centuries. These are the main attractions to a specific segment of tourists who have specific motivation to visit rural areas such as; heritage & nature, authentic rural experience, social life

of rural communities and learning (Rid et al., 2014). Additionally, to enhance this attractiveness, it is important to ensure the sustainability of the local's natural ways of life by their active inclusion in tourism planning. There are multiple external and internal stakeholders involved in tourism development; such as host community, tourism industry players, government and consumers, hence the development of a successful rural tourism is dependent on fulfilling the objectives of all stakeholders in the system. The inter relationships among the stakeholders must be fully identified since each stakeholder's needs may be different from the others.

A considerable amount of literature has been published on positioning of tourism destinations (Haahti, 1986; Fakeye, & Lue, 1992; Chen & Uysal, 2002; Kim & Agrusa, 2005; Crompton, Frochot & Kreziak, 2008; Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011; Pike, 2012). Yet, few have addressed the issues of destination positioning analysis and the role of affective participation of local community (Lo, Mohamad, Songan, & Yeo, 2012). Much of these studies have shifted onto tourism policy making and exploring tourists perspective rather than rural communities perceived positioning. For example, Botha, Crompton, & Kim, 1999 has examined the existing positioning of a destination in South Africa from the tourists perspective. The empirical data from their study shows the strength of the destination as compared to its competitiors. Another study by Kim and Agrusa (2005) has investigated the competitiveness of seven overseas honeymoon destinations among potential Korean tourists, and the positioning among them. Haahti (1986) explored the relative status of Finland as a summer holiday site along with 10 other European countries using multidimensional scaling technique. He conducted a positioning analysis from the urban tourists perspective. Moreover,

Pike (2012) have identified a research gap in the area of destination marketing organisations by development of positioning themes to suit the needs of different markets. He has applied two qualitative techniques used to explore the range of cognitive attributes, consequences and personal values that represent potential positioning opportunities in the context of short break holidays. Although the above-mentioned studies are primarily concerned with a more typical approach,that is tourists, there are few studies to raise this issue of ignoring residents perceived positioning. Nevertheless the scope of the study raises questions about thefocus on urban residents and omitting rural communities. Such as Gartner (1989) investigated the competitiveness of four US states for their inherited tourism and recreation attributes (activities) using multidimensional scaling technique. He has taken urban resident's perspective for attributes like nightlife and social-cultural based entertainment. Another study by Pike and Ryan (2004) has conducted positioning analysis of New Zealand for short-break holidays. However the scope is also limited to urban households and tourism supply side.

To highlight tourism in rural communities, Cai (2002) have inverstigate positioning of rural destinations, through multiple rural communitiues brand image as perceived by tourists. His study have proposed a conceptual model of destination branding and also identified the rural communities attitude towards tourism development. Nevertheless the methodology chosen for the study is for tourists. Moreover the objective is more on exploring destination brand image through local support for tourism and failed to explore the rural communities's perspective in relation to the positioning of their destination. Another study that talks about on rural communities is (Schroeder, 1996). His study has examined the image perceived by local rural communities of their destination. Schroeder have stated that the image that the host

population has of its home area would be important as it may influence political support for efforts to promote and develop tourism, and it may influence the organic image developed in potential visitors via the information provided by host residents to friends, relatives, and business associates. Nevertheless, the main purpose of the study is only to rate the most attractive attributes of their destination and not exploring their attitude in details to affect their perception. Hence for the current study, it is proposed that while positioning rural tourism destinations, local community perspective and concerns should be incorporated into building image of their area as a tourist destination. This will help throw light on a few issues to make rural tourism contributing to country's economy and benefiting its own people at the same time. It will also help to show what local community believes their destination should be perceived by tourists (Schroeder, 1996) or what is worth to be presented as tourism product to the outer world.

2.3.1 Theoretical Models for Positioning, Re-positioning and Market Targeting

Positioning is a continuous process and not a once-off event (Bajec, 2015; Zhang, Lin, & Newman, 2016). Positioning is a process of introducing a new product while re-positioning can be done of an existing product (Zhang, Lin, & Newman, 2016). Tourism destinations worldwide are continuously faced with the challenge of positioning or re-positioning themselves through image creation, alteration, and reclassification of the tourism product (Buhalis, 2000).

Tourism destinations worldwide are faced with the challenge of positioning or re-positioning themselves through image creation, alteration or reclassification of the tourism product in their current positioning strategy (Buhalis, 2000).

Re-positioning is necessary as it allows destinations to re-focus on their unique attributes and image (Brackenbury, 2000). This is especially important when a tourism destination is existing products are overtaken by technology, the products have strayed from the customers' long-standing perception of them, tourists have changed their preferences (French, 1999; Zhang, Lin, & Newman, 2016), the fixed image does not promote the destination effectively (Aharoni, & Grinstein, 2017; Brackenbury, 2000), the environment has changed (Trout & Rivkin, 1996), increase in fierce competition (Mohamad, Abdullah, Ali, & Ghani, 2012) or to position a product against the countless competing places that offer similar features (Pike, 2012).

Often the repositioning required is small and gradual, a natural evolution into a new generation of product presentation. (Corstjens & Doyle, 1989) discusses three different types of repositioning strategy. Zero repositioning occurs when despite changing environment; a company continues to focus on its initial target market segment. That creates a gap between its product and market requirements. Gradual repositioning refers to the regular, generally small, adjustment a company makes in its product presentation, to maintain match between market requirements. However, radical repositioning is necessary when the positioning gap is large or when management has failed gradually reposition over a long period (Corstjens & Doyle, 1989).

Tourism destinations need to look for different marketing strategies that can identify and exploit new opportunities that are feasible with the local resources and are more attractive to tourist (Stetic, 2012). Thus, an analysis of customers' perception can help in identifying factors contributing to the success or failure of a marketing strategy, and consequently allow the destination to improve its product image in target markets (Ibrahim & Gill, 2005). Buhalis (2000) also suggests that destinations at the later stage of their evolutionary development should focus on alternative marketing strategies that support the image alteration and redesign of the tourism product. Destinations need to deliver a high quality product that corresponds to the changing tastes, needs, wants and demands of the international traveller (Liu, Li, & Kim, 2017). Jayawardena (2002) further posits that the use of well-developed niche-based marketing strategies can lead to total market growth. The development of such marketing strategies requires tourism officials to measure the image customers have of the destination's tourism products and identify how satisfied they are with the delivery of these products.

Difference between positioning and repositioning is that the development of a positioning strategy and selection of an initial target market is done prior to introduction of a new product/service. While after a new product/brand is introduced by an organization it needs to consider adjustments made to the initial positioning and to the initial target market. Any such adjustments being considered can be referred to as repositioning and retargeting (Ries & Trout, 2001). The literature posits several kinds of concepts used in positioning research (Boyd & Walker, 1990; Reich, 1999; Ries & Trout, 2001; Kotler et al., 2003; Lovelock & Wirtz, 2004; Gómez, Lopez & Molina, 2015; Kim & Chen, 2016). An illustration and summary of these researches is presented in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Summary of the Main Concepts used in Positioning Studies

Study	Features
Ries and Trout (2001, 1986)	• Ries and Trout are the pioneers of positioning in the marketing field
Kotler et al., (2003) Kotler (2000)	• Kotler is the foremost researcher who applied marketing to tourism industry • It is considered with interest in marketing and Positioning model by tourism literature
Boyd and Walker (1990)	• The process presented in this study is famous as market targeting and positioning decision model • The study managed to link the two terms in explaining the process of market targeting and Positioning
Lovelock (2003) Lovelock and Wirtz (2004)	• Focused on positioning a service in the market • Lovelock is the first person who applied positioning to service business in the market place
Reich (1999)	• Focused on positioning tourism destinations • Reich applied positioning to a tourist destination • He also indicated that positioning could be applied to any hospitality related product
Kim and Chen (2016)	• It augments the current formation process with the concept of 'schema', which is a mental structure of perceiving and classifying acquired information or knowledge. • This study first proposes two schema-related models that illustrate the image formation process before, during, and after the tourist trip.

Ries and Trout (1986) can be considered as pioneers of positioning and responsible for some of the freshest ideas to be introduced into marketing thinking in the last several decades. They explained that instead of trying to fight for a position in the prospects mind as the best, a company best bet is to position itself in a different category. Essentially, creating a new ladder for itself. At one point, they have highlighted the importance of looking inwards for the positioning ideas rather then look outward for the customer's demands. It helps to think about how a company see its business (or want to see it), and build its own strategy around projecting that.

Philip Kotler is one of the world's leading authorities on marketing. He is considered among the firsts to discuss the core importance and strategies in marketing. His work was firsrt published in 1967, introduced the concept that companies must be customer-and-market driven. But there was little mention of what have now become fundamental topics such as segmentation, targeting, and positioning. Differentiation and positioning model presented by Kotler is widely accepted in marketing and tourism literatures (Middleton, 2001; Morrison, 2002). Kotler (2000) has defined differentiation and positioning as differentiation is the act of designing a set of meaningful difference to distinguish the company's offering from competitor's offerings and positioning is the act of designing the company's offering and image to occupy a distinctive place in the target market's mind.

Kotler et al., (2003) have stated that positioning is an important part of marketing. It drives the company's vision, mission, and strategic planning. Further, Kotler, Keller, Ancarani, & Costabile, (2014) have defined the four holistic marketing practices that companies are applying. First of the these marketing approach is internal marketing, which means to ensure everyone in the organization embraces appropriate marketing principles, especially senior management. Second is integrated marketing, ensuring that multiple means of creating, delivering, and communicating value are employed and combined in the best way. Third is relationship marketing, that is having rich, multifaceted relationships with customers, channel members, and other marketing partners. Fourth and the last is performance marketing, this means understanding returns to the business from marketing activities and programs, as well as addressing broader concerns and their legal, ethical, social, and environmental effects.

Boyd and Walker (1990) have clearly presented the concept of positioning research. They proposed that positioning concerned the perceived match between a particular product, service offering and the target market. The market targeting means the determination of segment or segment within a market to which a business unit tries to market directly. The market positioning means the design of a marketing program and product that consumer desires. Additionally, the marketing program and product design will help the firm to have an advantage distinctive from the situation and competitors. They proposed that market segmentation be based on homogeneous requirements because it enables the marketer to create a marketing mix specifically designed to attract the chosen segment. At the same time, they contented that after the target segment is selected, there will be the issue of how the firm will present the position in a way that makes consumers perceive that it has benefited the consumer's desire and position the firm to stand out against the competitors.

Lovelock is the first person to apply positioning to a service business. He starts his model by building difference between goods and services and defined this difference as the process of establishing and maintaining a distinctive place in the market for the organization and/or the presentation of its individual product (Loverlock & Wirtz, 2004). Loverlock and Wirtz (2004) and Lovelock (1991) suggested to focus on a few basic steps in positioning. Such as it is necessary to analyse the market to determine the trends and demands. Besides this, it is also important to do internal analysisof the company resources, strength and weaknesses to know the exact details of a service/product. The analysis findings will help the company in selecting suitable target market. Lastly, it is also necessary to do the competitive analysis as it helps a company identifies its strategic strong and weak points in order to create a selling point which

is different from the competitor. Further, Lovelock and Wirtz (2000) have suggested the use of positioning maps to identify the perception of consumers in order to compare it with the positioning presented by the company. They have also presented the concept of positioning as a further step continuing from market segmentation. The position selected by marketer is important and necessary to the target market and it can make tourists realized that a destination is better in terms of service than its competitors.

Reich (1999) has presented a positioning process applicable to several kinds of product relating to hospitality. Reich states that to develop an ideal positioning strategy, there is more than one processes involved in position development strategy. Reich (1999) has suggested the positioning process in five steps.

First step is to determine the targeted customer choice in different attributes or combination of attributes. Then next step is to locate the product's current position relative to the customer demans and other competing offers. Reich (1999) contended that the market position of an organization tends to move back and forth in a linear manner. Thus, it is more valuable and useful for determining the specific future position than the overall current position. Third step in developing a positioning strategy is to analyze the destination current position and determine its desired position as this will guide everyone on how to allocate the resources. In fourth step, management can decide the available options, such as to identify the chance and do it before its competitors, or duplicate other competing products as soon as possible), or do the same thing but with slight changes, and sometimes more aggressive strategic options which are necessary to attain the desired position. The fifth and the last step is, selecting a

positioning or re-positioning strategy. This step is required as with passage of times, customer's preferences changes which make it important to revise the positioning process.

Kim and Chen (2016) have undertaken a study on destination image positioning and promotion that extends the literature by creating a schemadriven, that may be served as a theoretical foundation to guide future research agendas on destination images. To expand the current perspective on the tourism destination image formation process, their study highlights the concept of 'schema'- a mental structure of perceiving and classifying acquired information or knowledge. This study first proposes two schema-related models that illustrate the image formation process before, during, and after the tourist trip. They have focused on destination factors such as place, any mega event, crisis, self, and emotion to represent the image formation process that is constantly modified owing to its dissimilation with new information, wherein these information sources could affect the formation of the destination image before the trip.

2.3.2 Positioning a Rural Tourism Destination-Adopting a Local Community Approach

Extensive Extensive research is available in the tourism literature investigating the demand side perspective on tourism attractions and image of a particular tourism destination (Uysal, Chen, & Williams, 2000; Ibrahim & Gill, 2005; Tkaczynski, Hastings, & Beaumont, 2006; Frochot & Kreziak, 2008; Pike, 2012; Mohamad et al., 2013; Prayag & Hosany, 2014; Rid, et al., 2014; Zhang, Lin, & Newman, 2016; Seongseop Kim, Chun, & Petrick, 2005). These studies show that tourism image has mostly been viewed as an evaluation of tourists' experiences while they travel. The factors that attracts tourists and affect their image

formation process are various, for example historical buildings, natural landscapes, cultural and social events and sporting events (Wang & Bramwell, 2011). Therefore, tourists on the demand side are the centre of attraction for policy makers, marketers and researchers (Formica, 2000).

On the supply side, literature has studied the involvement of local communities for two main reasons, namely the kind of impacts they receive i.e. tangible and intangible, positive and negative; (Kuvan & Akan, 2005; Tovar & Lockwood, 2008; Sharma, & Dyer, 2009; Egbali, Nosrat & Pour, 2011; Brida, Osti & Faccioli, 2011; Deery, Jago & Fredline, 2012; Woosnam, et al., 2013; Kim, Uysal & Sirgy, 2013; Zhou, Lu, & Yoo, 2014;) and their attitude towards tourism development (Mason & Cheyne, 2000; Sirakaya, Teye, & Sönmez, 2002; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Andereck, Valentine & Vogt, 2005; Kwon & Vogt, 2010; Draper et al., 2011; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Sharpley, 2014). However, the community's perspective and influence on positioning of a tourism destination has been rarely studied. We propose that the objectives of all stakeholders should be fulfilled (especially in rural tourism). This includes incorporating the local community's perspective and concerns into building the image of the tourist destination. The development of tourism in a rural area is not simply a matter of matching tourist demands with local product supply, but a matter of evaluating local suitability and acceptability (Gopal, 2008). According to Besemenji et al., (2011), tourism can be a good way of preserving the customs and culture of a particular destination, but only if the right people are involved and if the benefits of tourism are widely shared in community. Breugel (2013) highlighted that when tourism is controlled by local community then it will be the community decision which cultural traits they would like to share with tourists depending

on the safety of both, cultural trait and tourists. This kind of tourism is more sustainable and has less negative impacts on the natural environment and local communities (Arnstein, 1969; Tosun, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the researcher has adopted five significant attributes to examine the positioning concept of rural tourism destination by adopting a local community approach. These are environmental, social and cultural, entertainment, authentic rural experiences, and learning. Next section of the study will explain these attributes in detail.

2.3.2.1 Environmental Attributes

The environmental attraction for tourism purposes got importance after realising the fact that now the world has to utilise environment wisely for the future generations (IIPT, 2000). However the desire to visit the nature and traditional lifestyle was provided in rural destinations also making it attractive for tourists and visitors. The future of sustainable tourism relies on the recognition of the link between environmental conservation and tourism development. Fennell (2014) suggests that the key to achieving compatibility is to start with clearly defined environmental, tourism, and sustainable environmental-tourism goals. Most of the rural tourism products are based on the environmental resources (Kunjuraman & Hussin 2017); this also makes it one of the main objectives of the local communities, besides economic benefits, to conserve the forest for environmental sustainability. According to Rid, Ezeuduji, and Pröbstl-Haider (2014) envirnmental attractions in some rural destinations could be relaxed natural environment, rural landscape, boating, jungle trekking, watching wildlife animals, and birds.

Other researchers, such as Camelia, Marius-Răzvan, Cristi, and Ana-Irina (2012) have also found that rural communities thought that tourism helps protect their natural environment. However, emphasizing on the active role by local communities, Stetic (2012) argued that a preserved environment could only sustain form negative tourism impact, if the local community have meaningful participation in decision-making process. Mass tourism has been earlier embraced by most of the governments, as it in world to increases employment rates and economic prosperity, especially in developing countries. Nonetheless, mass tourism development projects are often ridden with long-term negative impacts on the environment (Archer, Cooper, & Ruhanen, 2005). For example, Pattaya in Thailand was affected by environmental pollution; it subsequently lost a large number of tourists due to its negative image (Tiamkerakul, 1996). In the early 1990's, the concept of sustainable tourism was introduced to direct attention towards environment protection practices (Andereck, Valentine, Vogt, & Knopf, 2007). At the same time environmental attractions received greater importance, after increased emphasis on utilizing the environment wisely for the sake of future generations (IIPT, 2000). Environmental factors became the focus of tourism planning and a trend emerged towards position destinations as "green", "eco-friendly", "sustainable" and "natural". The WTO stated, "Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and *environmental* impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the *environment* and host communities".

The definition according to Mac (2002) in WTO Seminar oriented towards the alternative that rural tourism represents to mass tourism. Tourists seek rural peace, that "is tourism away from areas of intensive tourism activity" and that "it is engaged in by visitors who wish to

interact with the rural environment and the host community, in a meaningful and authentic way". Furthermore, the United Nations declared as the year of eco-tourism. The concept of eco-tourism was attractive to destinations that were already facing intensive competition and adverse effects of mass tourism. For example, Thailand changed their tourism strategy towards eco-tourism, agro-tourism, and green tourism, to counter the issue of environmental degradation (Sarobol, 2004).

The interest in ecotourism has demonstrated that tourism can be an important force for the restoration or conservation of environments (Richardson, 1993). Rural communities utilize natural resources in sustainable ways, such that there is very little damage to the environment (Okazaki, 2008). The environmental value in rural tourism is an essential element of a positioning strategy; support from local communities also plays an important role in ensuring sustainability of rural tourism development (Spencer & Nsiah, 2013). Rural area is a place where rural people live; they have a better understanding of their area and its main attractions (Breugel, 2013) therefore the image of their area as a tourism destination should be established from the residents' perspective (Hwang, Park, Hunter, & Kim, 2014). If effectively combined, the elements of environmental value and community perspective ensure a better positioning of rural tourism destination.

2.3.2.2 Social and Cultural Attributes

Interest in cultural heritage emerged as a tourist attraction during the 1990's and became an important economic asset and a mechanism to preserve ethnicity (Ray, Dash, Sengupta, & Ghosh, 2012). The appeal of the rural areas for tourists lies mainly in the natural surroundings

and their intrinsic social and cultural characteristics (Albaladejo-Pina & Díaz-Delfa, 2009). If a tourism destination meets the basic social and cultural needs of visitors, then the rich cultural heritage will positively impact the tourist turnover (Asante, 2015).

In 2012, Thailand launched the "New Heart for a Sustainable Thailand" campaign, to encourage travellers to appreciate the culture, environment, and heritage to promote subsistent tourism (Ngowsiri, 2013). Another example is the vision of Croatian Tourism, as tourism in Croatia "is based on a sustainable use of natural and cultural-historical potential, an active role in its preservation and development, and creating an environment attractive to investors" (Marinov, 2008). For many rural communities, including those on Borneo Island, it is a great challenge to protect their cultural property from urbanization and industrial interventions. Tourism can play a key role in preserving culture and traditions (Medina, 2003; Cánoves, Villarino, Priestley, & Blanco, 2004). Studies have shown that indigenous communities felt strongly towards the cultural benefits of tourism and were highly concerned about its management to preserve the distinct cultural atmosphere (Besculides et al., 2002; Kunasekaran, Gill, Talib & Redzuan, 2013). It is the rural community that provides the knowledge of traditions that contributes to the tourists' authentic experiences (MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003). According to Kastenholz, Davis, and Paul, (1999) social and cultural attractions in a rural tourism destination include historical architecture and monuments, cultural and folklore events, opportunities to socialize with families, as well as playing with children and traditional games and sports. Besides these factors, other rural features like rural population, local traditions, customs, history and heritage, crafts, and gastronomy contribute to a tourism destination image and make proper positioning in the market in relation to

tourism consumers, competition and the global tourism market (Stetic, 2012). Cultural attractions also include interpretive centres, performances, festivals, home-stays, guided tours and a range of other offerings that feature rural communities' culture and traditions. These activities encourage both tourists and local people to participate in tourism activities together.

For rural communities and specifically indigenous rural communities on Borneo Island, it is a great challenge to protect their cultural property from urbanization and industrial intervention. In this situation, tourism plays a key role in preserving their culture to some extent and making it a way to earn some financial benefits (Medina, 2003). As argued by Cánoves, Villarino, Priestley, and Blanco, (2004) that although rural tourism was encouraged globally as an income diversification strategy but it also plays an important role in preservation and promoting local traditions and culture. Another study by Besculides et al., (2002) and Kunasekaran, Gill, Talib, and Redzuan (2013) indicates that indigenous community of a tourist destination felt strongly towards cultural benefits of tourism and were more concern about its management to preserve the distinct cultural atmosphere. In recent years there has been increase in cultural tourism to rural areas.

Not only tangible attractions, but also intangible characteristics of the rural people are also important. This is reflected in the basic values and principles that are infused in the way an enterprise is operated. For example, individualized forms of hospitality found in rural indigenous destination communities, result in local communities being more willing to share their place, culture and traditional way of life with others (Butler & Hinch, 2010). According to studies the benefits of tourism, like learning, awareness, family bonding, an increased

understanding, and tolerance, can be realized by both tourists and the host community (Ahmad et al., 2014; Wang, & Pfister, 2008). Besides natural environment, traditions and culture are essential part of rural tourism and it is the rural community that provides the knowledge of traditions and folklore that contribute to tourists' authentic experiences without endangering the resource concerned (MacDonald and Jolliffe, 2003). Nowadays urban and even rural life are affected by industrial revolution and the boosted population gave birth to many problems, so placing a high value on cultural treasures seems to be a must to strengthening human relations and establishing a peaceful life (Egbali, Nosrat, & Pour, 2011).

Rural tourism businesses are usually small and mostly operate on a local and regional basis, outside the mainstream tourism (McKercher & Robbins, 1998). Only the destinations that have exceptional cultural characteristics, with the right attractions and infrastructures, can effectively harness the rural tourism market (Roberts & Hall, 2001; Lewis-Cameron & Roberts, 2010; Carlsen & Butler, 2011; Santos, 2014). The scale of tourism promoted in rural areas is diverse, however integrating local products or cultural attributes into tourism through rustic seasoned event tourism can help shape rural tourism (Liu, 2006).

2.3.2.3 Entertainment Attributes

Entertainment and recreational activities are an essential part of tourism, whether it is in urban or rural areas. Petrick, Morais, and Norman (2001) argued that entertainment destinations cater to tourists who enjoy engaging in diverse amusement related activities. They further added that the success of Branson in Missouri as an entertainment destination and a centre of theatres have driven many cities and towns throughout the United States to build live theatres

in hopes of attracting more tourists. Past researchers have also identified some issues associated with the destinations that were specifically positioned as entertainment destinations such as unreliability in terms of success (Minton 1998) and establishing the destination own entertainment "niche" for attracting tourists (Francaviglia 1995). Thus it is crucial for entertainment destinations to identify the factors that help in attracting new visitors as well as retain the previous visitors.

The most important forms of entertainment in rural areas are cultural shows, historical entertainment, maintaining physical and mental balance, commercial activities and culinary experiences (Turcu, 2014). There has been increased demand from tourists who want to enjoy nature found only in rural environments as well as to experience cultural heritage that is still preserved by the rural communities (Kastenholz, Davis, & Paul, 1999; Ray, et al., 2012; Yusof, Muda, Amin, & Ibrahim, 2013). Tourists desire to experience authentic entertainment activities in nature and within rural life. Local communities thus have the opportunity to transform their agricultural facilities into entertainment activities (Buhalis, 2000). Many of these include an educational element, particularly for children, which highlight the rural diaspora that may have never experienced agricultural life.

Even though recreational activities in tourism have received significant attention, conclusive information has not been gathered regarding rural residents' perspective towards these activities. This study investigated rural residents' views toward recreation and tourism development and associated factors that may influence their attitudes. Rural tourism does not only provide entertainment opportunities to the tourists, but also to the local communities

(Schroeder, 2004); thus, entertainment activities do have an effect on the communities support for tourism development.

2.3.2.4 Authentic Rural Experience

Authenticity is an important aspect of any rural tourism destination and it provides a competitive edge to the product by creating a unique image (Govers, Go, & Kumar, 2007). However, there is a huge debate about the meaning and validity of authenticity in rural tourism experiences (Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Cohen, 1988; Littrell et al., 1993; Ehrentraut, 1993; Bruner, 1994; Harkin, 1995; Hughes. 1995; Brown, 1996; Daniel, 1996). According to Gannon (1994) the main components of rural authenticity are genuine quality, originality, uniqueness, a sense of place and pride. It is manifested in the lifestyle and the life quality of the community. In particular, it relates to the behaviour, integrity, friendship, and sincerity of the people who live in and develop the community.

Rural communities in emerging tourism destinations attract adventurous tourists who are prepared to forego their comfort, in order to interact with local communities and experience authentic rural life (Buhalis, 2000). Enjoying cultural and traditional activities in rural tourism destinations is an important part of the destination attraction, but tourists are also interested in learning about the difference between the old traditional and the transformation to modern lifestyles. Medina (2003) highlighted the issues related to commoditization of culture and distinguishes the different forms of traditions that persist in relative isolation from market forces, and practices elaborated specifically for the tourism market. Sim (2009) argues that

the focus should be shifted from “authenticity” towards “authentification”, which is the process whereby people make claims for authenticity and the interests that those claims serve.

Different destinations have different kinds of attributes that could be attractive for different groups of tourists. For example, when investigating the Maori culture in New Zealand, McIntosh (2004) found that the majority of tourists were interested in an authentic rural experience of the Maori culture. They wished to get involved personally in the daily lives of the community members, have an opportunity to exchange culture or share ideas and thoughts about life, and meet Maori people in a genuine encounter (i.e., less commercialized). Furthermore, Kastenholz, Carneiro, Peixeira Marques, and Lima (2012) concluded that social, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of the experience, associated with rural tourism, are important determinants of tourist satisfaction.

2.3.2.5 Learning Attributes

In addition to the economic benefits of the tourism there are many others positive impacts, such as improving individual well-being, fostering cross-cultural understanding, facilitating learning, promoting peace, and fomenting global consciousness (Cohen & Kennedy, 2000). In the 1990s, many of the researchers of anthropological perspective approached tourism as social force. Barnard and Spencer (1998) argued “to ignore tourism in our accounts of culture contact in the 20th century is probably as great an omission as to ignore slavery in the 18th century or colonialism in the nineteenth”. In the last two decades, tourism has been widely recognised as a powerful social force that can achieve many important ends when its capacities are unfettered from the market fundamentalism of neoliberalism and instead are

harnessed to meet human development imperatives and the wider public good (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006).

McIntosh (2004) describes that apart from enjoying a destinations culture, a majority of the tourists are also interested in informal learning with the local people. This learning could be about local culture, traditional dances, local languages, myths, local legends, and handicrafts. Whether in formal or informal way, there is always some kind of two-way learning between tourists and the host whether in formal or informal way. Besculides et al., (2002) have indicated about cultural benefit between tourist and the local community and mentioned the two ways learning from each other. Rural home-stay tourism particularly offers a great exchange in learning. A rural tourism product, homestay, also provides one of such benefits. According to Bhuiyan, Siwar, and Ismail (2013) home-stay tourism creates an opportunity for visitors to get closer to the rural world, to its culture and heritage, to the notion of the countryside, to peacefulness, and to physical and spiritual rejuvenation. McKean (1989) boldly claims: "underlying tourism is a quest or an odyssey to see, and perhaps to understand, the whole inhabited earth, the oikumene. Tourism can be viewed as not an entirely banal pleasure-seeking escapism, but as a profound, widely shared human desire to know "others," with the reciprocal possibility that we may come to know ourselves."

Hence learning from different cultures with their diverse knowledge is a valuable opportunity that works for both, visitors and the host. Research tourism and development conferencing falls in this category of tourism. In research tourism, researchers from educational institutes spend time at their study sites collecting data and studying a variety of cultural, social,

economic, scientific, and environmental enquiries, whereby the community under study holds a stake in the outcome (Harris, 2009). For example, local communities in Batang Ai National Park, Malaysia, particularly like the knowledge that they gain from tourists (Bratek, Devlin, & Simmons, 2010). However, in previous literature to the best of our knowledge, learning in a tourist destination has been rarely focused as a separate destination attribute.

2.4 Community's Perspective and Rural Tourism

Mollahosseini and Karbasi (2012) define "perspective" as a complicated state of emotions, desires, beliefs, prejudices and tendencies that make some sort of acceptance and readiness in person's behavior due to his various experiences. To achieve successful tourism development, tourism officials and developers need to view tourism as a community industry (Murphy, 2013). One of the core elements of tourism development is to encourage local communities to participate in positioning tourism destinations, as it is central to the sustainability of the tourism industry. Increased motivation and active involvement in rural tourism business will have a positive effect on the communities' quality of life and their support of tourism development (Lee, 2013; Johari et al., 2015; Woo, Kim, & Uysal, 2015). However, before a community begins to develop tourism activities, understanding residents' perspective about tourism and their perceived image of community as tourism destination is important to get their support for future development (Liu, 2006).

Previous literature has explored the local community's perceptions, their role and the factors that may influence reactions towards tourism development (Liu, Sheldon, & Var, 1987; Milman & Pizam, 1988; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990; Lankford, 1994; Liu, 2006).

Understanding the community's attitudes and perceptions towards tourism development and other factors that may influence their reactions is essential in achieving a host community's support for tourism development (Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001). As noted earlier, thus far little emphasis has been given to the determinants that define the destination image from the local community's perspective. As a result, there has been little empirical evidence on how communities really perceive their place as a tourism destination and their role in tourism development (Muganda, Sirima, & Ezra, 2013).

Furthermore, identification and exploration of a community's perspective would not be effective without their active involvement in future decision making processes. The community members need rights, capacity, and adequate resources to take part in tourism development; unfortunately, the communities typically do not even know where to begin with this process (Okazaki, 2008). For example, Din (1993) reported that the community participation in the preparation of the Karaikudi Structure Plan in Tamil Nadu, India, was successful in its initial stages but failed later on because communities were not able to influence the decision making process. Furthermore, Liu (2006) argues that in Malaysia tourism officials haven't given focused on understanding local culture and social and cultural diversity that results in lacking support for local community readiness for tourism activities.

There are different facets of community participation and the community perspective for positioning rural tourism destination is one of them. In the current research, we explored the community perspective in relation to positioning, with five interrelated elements. These are

motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment and infrastructure. In next section, we will discuss each of them in detail.

2.4.1 Community Motivation

Motivation is the fundamental drive behind particular behaviors (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981; Pearce, 1997). Motivation plays an important role in understanding the decision making process of individuals, local communities, as well as the satisfaction of tourist's expectations (Phan, 2010). Murray (1964) defines motivation as an internal factor that arouses, directs, and integrates a person's behaviour; it is not directly observable, but inferred from behaviour or simply assumed to exist in order to explain a behaviour. Solomon, Russell-Bennett, and Previte (2012) define motivation as a process that leads people to behaviour, a process that begins when a need arises.

Identifying the needs and expectations of the local communities involved in the tourism business, will help shed light on their motivation and sustain their support (Timothy & Tosun, 2003). A few studies have examined the community's motivations for tourism promotion; they found diverse aspects such as economic, sociological, and physiological benefits (Getz & Carlsen, 2000; Kim & Butler, 2015). Although it is assumed that economic benefits are the foremost reason for rural communities to support tourism, it may not actually be so. Schroeder (2004) studied the motivations of tourism operators in the northern Great Plains region of the US. He found that sometimes the economic benefits were exceeded by non-economic benefits, such as positive social relationships, civic mindedness, and the desire to control youth emigration by creating local opportunities. Ollenburg and Buckley (2007),

similarly found that social motivations are marginally more important than economic motivations.

McKercher, Ho and du Cros (2005) stated that cultural preservation is another factor that motivates local communities to be engaged in rural tourism. Early studies suggested that commoditisation of culture for tourism results in new forms of emerging cultures, which may be different from traditional practices of the community (Greenwood, 1977; Ryan, 1996). However, Cohen (1998) argues that commoditisation may actually preserve traditions by generating demand for or attributing value to them. Thus, governments do not need to invest much into rural tourism, as communities are intrinsically motivated regarding the social benefits over an increased income.

Ahmad et al., (2014) conducted a study in Malaysia, in which they investigated the start-up motivations of rural entrepreneurs of home-stays, a least researched area, for one of the very famous rural tourism product, homestay, through push and pull factors. They found that the main motivations of homestay operators are different to businesses in other sectors, namely rural entrepreneurs were motivated to achieve personal satisfaction from tourism activities. According to Cooper (1998), "the image of a destination created through several communication methods and channels will influence motivation and subsequently affect the type of travel undertaken."

In the current research the community's motivation to position rural tourism was measured through their motivation to *promote* their village as a tourist destination, with natural scenic

beauty, cultural attractions, entertainment and recreational activities, a good place for family vacations, and experiencing real rural life.

2.4.2 Community Readiness

Community readiness or capacity to participate in tourism development refers to the level of competence, ability, and skills needed to set and achieve relevant tourism goals (Balint, 2006). Being a service industry, tourism strongly requires its operators to be ready for providing professional services to the consumers and to keep them not only involved but also satisfied in every aspect (Albayrak, Caber, Hutcheson, & Moutinho, 2016). Tourists have plenty of choices for tourist destinations, so this need to have a proper setup that will translate into customer loyalty. Rural tourism development cannot work without the widespread participation and collaboration of local community directly and indirectly involved in tourism (Wilson, Fesenmaier, Fesenmaier, & Van Es, 2001). To date, little attention has been focused on assessing the existing literature of rural tourism to determine key success criteria or barriers in order to mobilise global knowledge for increasing the development of successful rural tourism. According to Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, (2016), readiness of local community is required in several key elements of rural tourism, such as capacity building to strengthen community's tourism management skills, partnerships facilitating links to market to promote local tourism product and empowerment of community members. The capacity and infrastructure of tourism operators and stakeholders are the two main components of community readiness; they have major bearings on the effective use of tourism as development strategy (Bourke & Luloff, 1996; Reid, Mair, & George, 2004; Moscardo, 2008). Understanding customers' perceptions and expectations is a major challenge for the

local rural community (Lo et al., 2012). While it is a fact that most rural communities are by nature hospitable, tourism as a business presents greater challenges to them (Hamzah & Khalifah, 2008). Their lack of preparation for managing day-to-day tourism tasks affects the overall service quality and ultimately tourists satisfaction (Stetic, 2012; Kunjuraman & Hussin, 2017). Key aspects that promote community readiness include existing development programmes and activities in the community, available infrastructure, community assets, leadership, external networks and support, skill and knowledge, and sense of community and resources or capital (Slater et al., 2005; MacLellan-Wright et al., 2007; Moscardo, 2008; Aref, 2011). These dimensions have important roles in the success of any community-based tourism, and it can help individuals, communities, and organizations, to more effectively influence the tourism policymaking process.

In the current research, readiness of the residents for the positioning of rural tourism is measured through the variety of unique cultural attractions and performances offered, the communities commitment to provide a satisfactory vacation experience, tour guides and translators facilities, readiness to share social and cultural knowledge, the existence of natural sceneries, and the availability of tourism related information documents.

2.4.3 Community Involvement

Involvement is a core concept that helps explain individuals' participation in activities and their action with respect to their attitude (Dimanche, Havitz, & Howard, 1993; Havitz & Dimanche, 1999). Literature has discussed local support for tourism development with a focus on resident involvement in rural tourism activities (Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009;

Dogan Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2010; Nicely & Sydnor, 2015). A community's involvement in the planning, development, and marketing of tourism in their homelands is a critical requirement for the sustainable growth of rural tourism (Razzaq et al., 2011; Ertuna & Kırbaş, 2012). The benefits of the development activities can be extended to the local community by involving them in decision-making and management of tourism activities (Din, 1993). The level and nature of community involvement in tourism development varies dramatically at tourism destinations, ranging from degrees of tokenism to full community control (Arnstein, 1969; Tosun, 2006). The pursuit of benefit sharing is not the ultimate solution for involving local community nor is it without complications (Ngowsiri, 2013). The involvement of a local community depends on set objectives and benefits for the residents (Strickland-Munro & Moore, 2013). The participation in decision-making will create a sense of ownership for community members; it will also foster relationships among planners, decision makers, and local communities (Timothy & Tosun, 2003).

In Malaysian, the local Bidayuh community is consistently involved in the development of tourism planning in their community (Johari et al., 2015). However, there is a lack of trust between the community and tourism planners, which resulted in the community feeling as if they have only little control over the decision making process. Butler and Hinch (2010) argue for greater involvement and empowerment of local communities, to avoid any misleading or inappropriate representation of their social or cultural personas in positioning of their tourism destination. Goodman, et al., (1998) labelled local leadership as a dimension for community capacity to achieve tourism development. They stated that community leaders could ensure active involvement of various community members, thus enabling those with different

interests to take collective action by forming a unit of solution. Timothy and Tosun (2003) proposed that community involvement should deal with achieving sustainable tourism development, increasing tourist satisfaction, fair distribution of costs and benefits of tourism between involved stakeholders, satisfaction of local-felt-needs, and strengthening the democratisation process in local tourist destinations.

In the current research, the community's involvement in the positioning of rural tourism is measured through their participation in tourism related activities, involvement in planning and management, decision making, and encourage residents to invest in development of sustainable tourism (Lee, 2012).

2.4.4 Community Attachment

McCool and Martin (1994) defines community attachment as social engagement and participation in community activities that reveals the emotional bond between an individual and a specific community. If the social and physical resources within residential environments are sufficient to satisfy the needs and preferences of local communities, an attachment to the place occurs. Furthermore, the characteristics of the people and the place influence that attitudes towards a specific place and it might also be an effect of people's and places' characteristics, thus influencing attitudes and behaviours towards a place (Shumaker & Taylor, 1983). The concepts related to individual's attachment have been used to understand and evaluate human behaviour (Lee, 2013). Community attachment is a multifaceted concept for evaluating the attitude of residents; it and is validated through community identity, inter-

dependence, social capital, and bonding within a community (Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004).

The literature provides diverse perspectives on the relationship between the community attachment of host residents and their support for tourism development (McCool & Martin, 1994; Pennington-Gray, 2005). Studies have indicated that community attachment directly affects the community's support for tourism development (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Gu & Ryan, 2008; Nicholas et al., 2009; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Lee, 2013; Wang & Xu, 2015). Community attachment also affects the positioning of their destination image (Getz, 1991; Boo & Busser, 2005; Quinn, 2009). However, other research has found an insignificant relationship between community attachment and the support for tourism development (Dogan Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Choi & Murray, 2010). In their research, Anton and Lawrence (2014) examined attachment of urban and rural residents and argue that rural residents were more attached to their local place, compared to their urban counterparts. Attachment to one's culture and traditions also plays a major role in the support of tourism activities and destination image. For example, a study by Besculides et al., (2002) examined the resident's perception of the cultural advantages and disadvantages that the community receives from tourism. They found that residents felt strongly about preserving the cultural atmosphere of their destination with the help of tourism. Gu and Ryan (2008) argue that community attachment and its contribution to place and self–identity has been largely over-looked in the tourism literature.

In the current research, community attachment is measured through their identity, inter-dependence, bonding, and affective responses and feelings in relation to their community (Lee, 2012). A significant characteristic of developing community-based rural tourism destinations is the process of bottom-up community engagement in developing the destination's image and strategies to design tourism products and services (Murphy, 2013). This characteristic presents an alternate response to traditional forms of tourism development, which mainly focus on economic profit maximization (Johnson, 2010). Schroeder (1996) concludes that the perceived image by residents influences the political support to promote and develop tourism; the community's perceived image may also influence the organic image developed by potential visitors. He and Sharpley (2014) acknowledge that less attention has been paid to measure communities' behavioural intentions with regard to the perceived image of a rural destination (Schroeder, 1996). After through study of literature, the researcher found very less research focus on exploring the relationship between residents' perspective and perceived positioning of their area as a tourist destination, so this study attempted to fill the gap by expanding the literature on understanding community's perspective on positioning tourism destination.

2.4.5 Tourism Infrastructure

The most important variable tourists consider while evaluating a destination is infrastructure; thus, this should be a vital point when planning product positioning. According to the World Bank report (2004), infrastructure is defined as the basic public infrastructure that formed the foundation to the social and economic development (Jusoh & Marzuki, 2014). Jovanović and Ilić (2016) have discussed three types of infrastructure, namely transport, social, and

environmental infrastructure. *Transport infrastructure* describes means and modes of access to a tourism destination from the international and domestic markets such as roads, railways trains and airports. *Social infrastructure* includes the place of residence and physical structures of a tourism destination that is offered to the tourist, such as homestays, hotels, meeting venues, and lodges, while *environmental infrastructure* comprises of natural attractions, such as national nature parks and marine conservation parks.

Most rural destinations have only basic infrastructures, compared to urban tourism destinations. This is however due to the fact that tourists do not want to have a lot man-made infrastructures in rural destination, as they want it to remain natural and pure. For example, in two studies of a rural destination in Serbia found that destination's position is strong in inherited resources (Mihalič, 2013; Armenski et al., 2012). However as stated by Croes (2011), "destinations cannot rely on their natural beauty alone", infrastructure is still one of the main determinants of tourists' arrival to a destination. This includes roads, water, electricity, security services, health services, communications, and public transport (Gearing, 1974). Tourism infrastructure is one of the important facilities of tourism development in a destination. According to Jovanović and Ilić (2016), the tourism infrastructure has positive impacts on productivity, distribution, and supply of tourism services. Specifically important for a long-term sustainability of tourism, infrastructure is a main factor that attracts a special market of tourism industry. In addition to these three types of infrastructure, Jusoh and Marzuki (2014) have describes *'shared usage'* of local infrastructure, meaning that the facilities provided are being shared by the locals as well as the travellers.

Any tourism destination cannot develop satisfactorily unless there are adequate conditions to provide basic facilities like accommodation, meals, and entertainment, in line with market requirements. The tourism infrastructure includes all goods and means created by human and the natural and inherited resources that a certain place has. Authors like Krippendorf (1971), Mihalič (2000), and Fisher (1985), consider it as complementarity of environmental and created resources and emphasize that one group of resources does not exist without the other and that they are interdependent. Failing any adequate tourism infrastructure, the development of the tourism phenomenon cannot be achieved. This research describes the role of infrastructure in the positioning of a rural tourism destination.

2.5 Relationship between Positioning and Community's Perspective

Positioning is a marketing technique to strategically strengthen a destination's tourism industry. According to Temporal (1999), positioning for a tourism destination is a necessity. Proper positioning among the consumers, means creating a good image among the potential customers. Traditionally positioning of a product focuses on two factors, namely product attributes and consumer expectations and perceptions (Lhotáková & Klosová, 2009).

The steps in the positioning process involved are as follows (Walker, 1990; Boyd & Ries & Trout, 2001; Kotler et al., 2003):

1) Tourism industry/planners explore tourists' expectations and perceptions about the target destination or competitors (see step 1 in Figure 2.1)

2) Tourism industry/planners explore similar or better competitor destinations' position, attributes, and price competitiveness (see step 2 in Figure 2.1)

3) Tourism industry/planners create a destination image based on the product attributes and promote it by unique selling propositions of the destination (see step 3 in Figure 2.1)

Market positioning is the first stage in which the tourism planners must distinguish segments and determine criteria by which the destination can satisfy the needs and desires of the tourists. Stetic (2012) pointed out that product attributes need to be distinctive from the competitors,; acceptable to the tourist market,; - satisfactory to the tourism clientele, and; distinctive regarding the demand. This is a complex process that requires careful analysis of all destination attributes and the characteristics of the target market. As rural tourism destinations are remote and not easily accessible, they are less explored and less researched (Twumasi, 2001).

Timothy (1999) and Tosun (2000) highlighted that tourism plans, particularly in developing countries, have been prepared by central governments as though local communities do not exist, resulting in a critically missing ingredient. Hence, other researchers (e.g., MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003; Lo, Mohamad, Songan, & Yeo, 2012; Lee, 2013; Johari et al., 2015; Woo, Kim, & Uysal, 2015) argued for local community participation in tourism planning, positioning, and marketing, as they know better about the destination attributes.

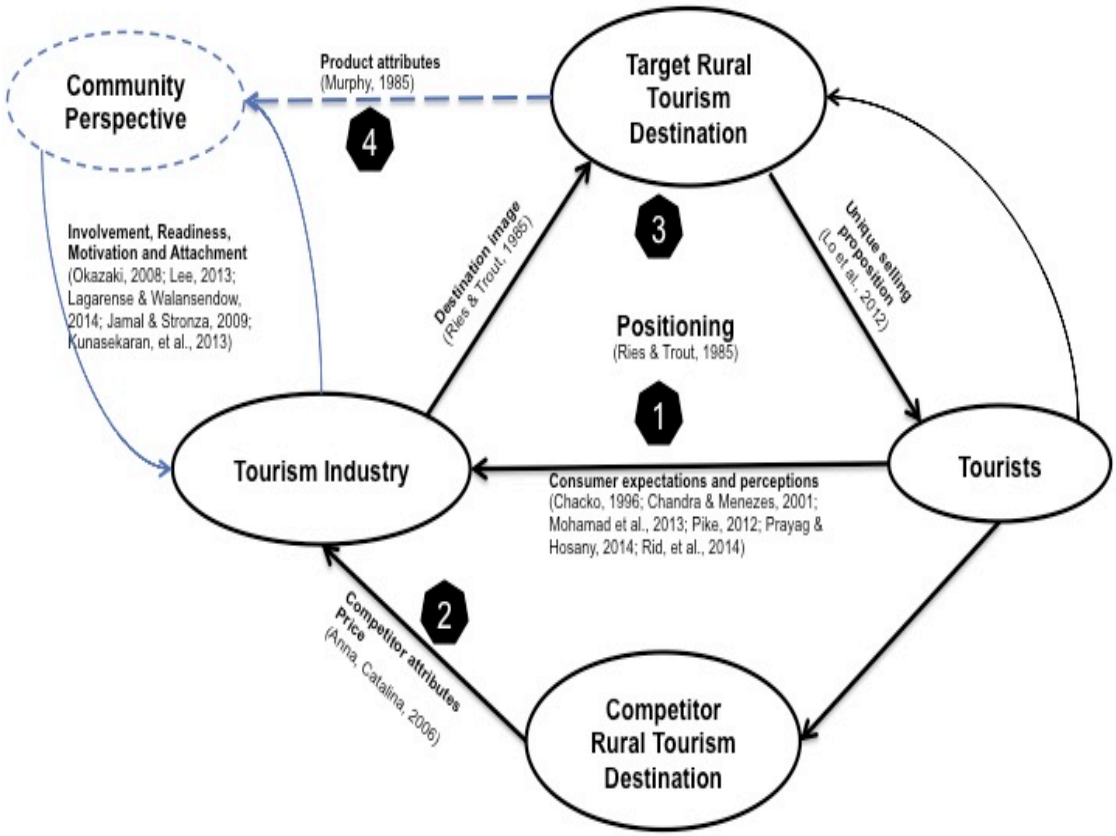


Figure 2.1: Positioning of a Rural Tourism Destination (Developed from literature)

Tkaczynski, Hastings, and Beaumont (2006) argued that destinations are need to be positioned on the attributes that are play to their strength and meaningfulness, and those attributes that can be fulfilled by tourism providers. The tourism planners need to consider the local community's perspective, in order to identify the destination attributes and products that can be transformed into unique selling propositions. The traditional way of positioning a rural tourism product (outside-in approach) and only considering tourists' perspective can bring homogeneity or similarity to different destinations. Rural communities are diverse in terms of social structure, history, culture, and traditions. This diversity can be a unique selling

proposition if the local community's perspective is integrated into the positioning strategies. Bringing attributes and products into a standardized framework can diminish their beauty and uniqueness. Ignoring local perspectives can create lack of interest by local communities in tourism activities (Liu, 2006). This will ultimately result in the loss of local culture, dissatisfied residents, and tourist satisfaction. The right selection of a positioning strategy will create a positive image and the desire for tourists to stay in a particular rural destination (Stetic, 2012). Under circumstances in which not all relevant facts are taken into account, negative effects may be provoked among potential customers. In addition, community participation and engagement in framing positioning strategies should be a continuous process.

2.6 Core Theories

To provide theoretical basis to the current study, there are three theories, namely positioning theory, social exchange theory (SET), and the theory of participatory development (TPD) (see Table 2.4). Positioning concept is the main aspect of the current study that explains the positioning of a tourism product. Based on Ries and Trout (2001), when considering positioning marketers need to think in the terms of "differentness" rather than "betterness". To explore this "differentness", the community's perspective is important to be included in positioning strategies however; community's perspective mainly depends on the impacts of tourism in rural community destination. Hence, the social exchange theory becomes relative in this case.

Table 2.4: Summary of the Variables Justified by Theories

	Positioning Theory	**Theory of Participatory Development**	**Social Exchange Theory**
Community's Perspective Motivation Readiness Involvement Attachment Infrastructure	--	Yes	Yes
Perceived Positioning Environmental Attributes Social and Cultural Attributes Entertainment Attributes Authentic Rural Experience Learning Attributes	Yes	Yes	--

SET is used to explain the relationship between communities' perspective toward tourism development with the exchange of resources. As a main theory, TPD provides basis to the concept of overall community participation in tourism development. TPD argues that participatory tourism development is pre-requisite to sustainability. Collectively these theories help to define community's influences on positioning of rural tourism.

2.6.1 Positioning Theory

The word "position" has long been used in the field of social psychology. According to Harré (1999), position is a cluster of rights and duties relevant to the actions of a person or group of people is a position (Harré, 1999). In the field of marketing it is one of the powerful tools to distinguish a product from other competitors. Ries and Trout were the first to introduce

positioning theory (1972, as cited by Botha, Crompton, & Kim, 1999). Since then it has been applied to various businesses, including tourism. Researchers have adopted the main concept of positioning to provide a theoretical basis to the development of a positioning strategy for a tourism product, such as Pike (2012) have elaborated that the concept of market positioning theory is based on three propositions. First, an over- communicated society, second, human mind only accept those messages that it notices, read and retain. Third, the way to cut through the noise in the market- place is through a focussed message, i.e. a unique positioning strategy. Other researchers using the same concept are (Chacko, 1996; Chen & Uysal, 2002; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Pike, 2003, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2012; Tkaczynski et al., 2006; Mohamad et al., 2013, 2012; Zhou, 2014).

According to its concept, positioning creates an image of a product in the mind of its customers. This image is the identity of that product that differentiates it from other competing brands in the same product category. Kotler (2005) describes positioning as the act of designing the offerings and image, so that they occupy a meaningful and distinctive competition position in the target customer's mind. Other authors argue that image formation is the key component of an effective positioning strategy (Calantone, Di Benetto, Hakam, & Bojanic, 1989; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). The highly competitive nature of the tourism industry has become a very important topic in tourism marketing strategies. As competition increases in the tourism field, the importance of a good positioning concept becomes clear (Chacko, 1996; Chen & Uysal, 2002; Pike, 2003, 2009, 2012; Pike & Ryan, 2004; Tkaczynski et al., 2006; Mohamad et al., 2013).

The positioning of a tourism destination is usually based on unique selling propositions (USP); these USP are aligned with the environmental, social, and cultural structure of the local community (Crouch, 2011). This in turn is directly related to the community's support and is affected by their perspective towards tourism. For the current study, positioning theory provides support to the already held image in the local community's mind on the basis of a product's strengths and weaknesses. Schroeder (1996) is among the few to talk about positioning of a rural destination from the local community's perspective. He states that the resident's perceived image may influence government support to promote and develop tourism, and it may influence the organic image developed in potential visitors. A number of destination positioning researchers have centred upon identifying how a destination is perceived by tourists (Sarma, 2003; Ibrahim & Grill, 2005; Kim & Agrusa 2005; Alcaniz et al., 2009; Qu et al., 2010). Only a few of them have collected views from diverse groups, especially stakeholders or local communities (Tkacznski et al., 2008; Pike, 2011; Lo, 2012; Ngowsiri, 2013). Besides, previous researches have largely concerned on the attributes of a destination such as tourists attraction and suggested to include more diveresd opinion of stakeholders (Mykletun et al., 2001; Ibrahim & Grill, 2005; Hunter & Suh, 2007; Alcaniz et al., 2009).

2.6.2 Theory of Participatory Development

Community participation as a tourism development strategy has been accepted and supported by many scholars of tourism (Murphy, 1985; Haywood, 1988; Blank, 1989; Keogh, 1990; Prentice, 1993; Simmons, 1994; Inskeep, 1994; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Tosun & Jenkins, 1998; Pongponrat, 2011; Porter, Orams, & Lück, 2017; Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Ahmad, & Barghi,

2017; Sood, Lynch, & Anastasiadou, 2017). Participation by local residents in development activities is considered to be an important tool in empowering community members to become part of the process and to have a voice in related decisions. Tosun (2000) considers community participation as an adaptive and categorical paradigm that allows local communities in various tourist destinations at different levels of development to participate in the decision making process of tourism development; this includes sharing the benefits of tourism development and determining the type and scale of tourism development in their localities.

In the current research, community participation is considered as a tool to design and position tourism activities in such a way that residents are encouraged to take tourism development matters into their own hands; they can mobilize their own resources and make their own decisions about how to promote tourism to differentiate their identity and for meeting their own needs. In other words, community participation in tourism development is based on their resources, needs, and decisions. Community participation usually begins with a bottom-up approach, involving major stakeholder groups. The process is initiated through a government's commitment to devolve some power to the community, and the community's recognition of the need to manage local areas (Kay & Alder, 1999). Direct participation of the residents in tourism-related projects, such as positioning rural tourism, also creates a sense of ownership in the outcome of the process.

The concept of community involvement in tourism development has moved closer to the idea of sustainability (Murphy, 1985). Furthermore, the greater the degree of community

participation, the better the development or planning will be. However, in reality, there may be many constraints because of paternalism, racism, clientelism, lack of financial resources, and lack of expertise in addition to the other structural problems (Tosun, 2000). On the other hand, local people may be placed fairly high up the ladder, but enthusiasm may wane over time, be lower than expected, or be preempted by other concerns beyond the community's control, such as the political and economic instability (Tosun, 2006; Sood, 2017). It is difficult to guarantee local enthusiasm for tourism activities, but it should be accepted that host communities would learn the politics of tourism development by participating in local institutions and associations that make decisions on tourism projects and other local developmental issues (Tosun, 2000; Porter, Orams, & Lück, 2017).

Local participation creates opportunities for residents to take tourism development matters into their hands. They can utilize their potential resources and should have more information about tourism development issues in general. Local communities should participate more in the decision making process of tourism development, positioning, and the benefits of tourism.

2.6.3 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) was introduced in 1958, by the sociologist, George Homans with the publication of his work "Social Behavior as Exchange". This theory explains social development and sustainability as a process of flexible exchange of rewards and benefits between different parties. Although this theory has its roots in various fields such as economics, physiology and sociology, Ap (1992) applied SET to tourism (Panji, 2015). He describes the theory as "a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the

exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation" (Ap, 1992). However, Perdue, Long, & Allen, (1990) were among the first ones to talk about this exchange of benefits and support between residents and tourism officials. Their study concluded that those people who benefit from tourism, perceive greater economic and less social and environmental impacts from tourism have positive support towards tourism developments than those who do not benefit. Later various other researchers have also used the SET to analyze residents' perspective and attitudes towards tourism development (Wang & Pfister, 2008; Diedrich & García-Buades, 2009; Kwon & Vogt, 2010; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Lee, 2013; Choo & Petrick, 2014; Sharpley, 2014; Woo et al., 2015).

According to this theory, people are likely to benefit from the exchange of rewards and costs to calculate the values of outcomes from different situations. Such exchanges could be materialistic, or of social and psychological nature. The fundamental determinants in influencing this relationship are valued rewards or benefits and perceived cost. Past studies by McGehee and Andereck (2004) as well as Wang and Pfister (2008), proposed a simple explanation that SET specifies the determinants (e.g., benefits and costs) in influencing tourism development. Their studies revealed that in order to gain the support of the rural community for tourism development, the benefits generated must outweigh the costs created. If the cost of tourism development dominates the benefits, the local community may oppose the tourism initiatives (Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams, 1997; Gursoy et al., 2002). SET draws upon economic, environmental, and sociocultural aspects that can assist in determining how residents will respond to future tourism development (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Dogan Gursoy et al., 2010; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011).

From a tourism standpoint, SET proposes that an individual's attitude towards tourism development will be influenced by assessing the resulting outcomes in the community. Furthermore, there must be an exchanges between the community and other stakeholders (McGehee & Andereck, 2004), residents must develop and promote the development, and serve the needs of the tourists (Harrill, 2004). Economic growth is considered one of the main reasons why rural communities engage in tourism; they can have an alternative income without leaving their own villages. Harrill (2004) argues that the economic benefit can be used to predict a community's attitude towards tourism. He added that tourism researchers have viewed the relationship between resident attitudes and economic dependency from various perspectives; local residents have a more positive attitude when they have finicially benefited from the development.

The current research intends to investigate the relationship between local communities' perspective toward tourism based on the tangible and intangible exchange of resources between the host community and tourists. In this study, SET relates the local communities perspective to the percieved positioning of their place on the basis of the benefits from an exchange of rewards and costs. Such exchange is not limited to financial benefits, but also to other benefits such as knowledge exchange (Liu, 2006; Bratek et al., 2010; Woo et al., 2015). In the same context another study has been conducted by Stylidis et al., (2014), it highlights that the role of residents' place image depends on the kind of impacts they receive, which ultimately shape their support for tourism development.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

Based on the literature review and above discussion we propose the following framework of positioning strategy for rural tourism, as shown in Figure 2.2. destination based on the local community's perspective.

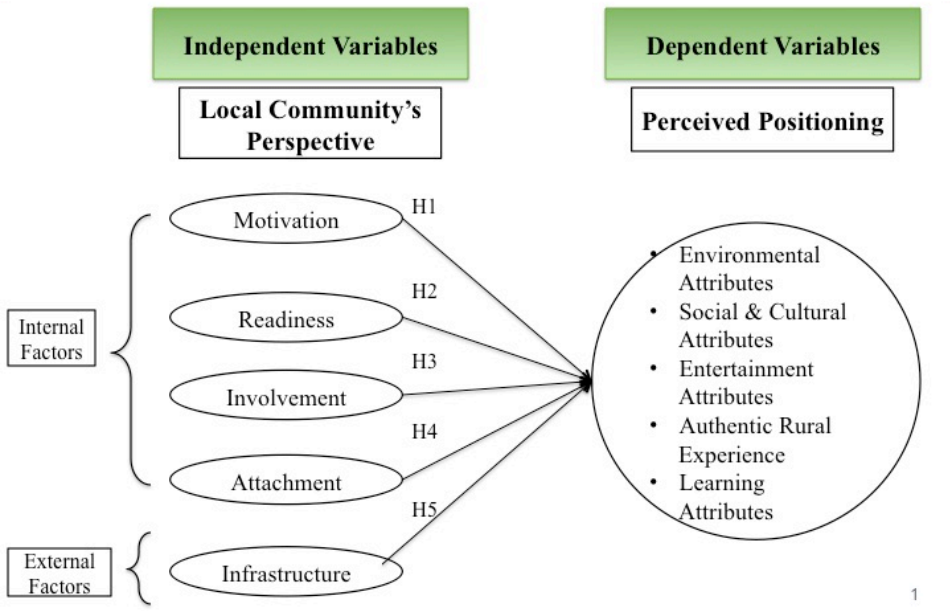


Figure 2.2: Proposed Theoretical Framework of the Study with Main Hypotheses

This framework shows the independent variables, i.e., the local community's perspectives, are believed to influence the dependent variable, i.e., the positioning of rural tourism destination. The outcome of the study is the framework for positioning strategy for rural tourism.

2.7.1 Gap in the Literature

Rural destinations are becoming increasingly popular among urban residents, and the

promotion of rural destinations is in urgent need of development (Zhou, 2014). However, a review of the literature reveals that destination images of rural destinations have scarcely appeared in the tourism literature (Cai, 2002; Royo-Vela, 2009). Image is the key construct in the destination positioning process (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Although extensive research has been done on the destination positioning process as such, as (Seongseop Kim, Chun, & Petrick, 2005; Tkaczynski, Hastings, & Beaumont, 2006; Pike, 2012; Mohamad et al., 2013; Prayag & Hosany, 2014; Rid, Ezeuduji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014). However these are bound within a limited domain. They focus on the demand side perspective of tourism attractions and image of a particular tourism destination. In other words, tourism image has mostly been viewed as an evaluation of tourists' experiences. However there is limited literature on rural tourism destination that examines the same attributes by exploring the local residents perception on positioning (Schroeder, 1996; Obonyo & Fwaya, 2012). For example studies by Lo et al., (2012) and Fong (2015) have only focused a limited aspect of community's perspective on positioning of a rural tourism destination, while the current study focuses on examining community's perspective in detail (i.e. motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, infrastructure). Furthermore, it discusses not only the perceived positioning by the local residents but also explores the relationship between their tourism perspective and destination attributes. Rural tourism positioning in Malaysia has been subjected to little research; furthermore, there is no known research on positioning analysis for rural tourism (Lo et al., 2012b).

Furthermore, no studies have clearly asked if tourism should be developed according to the local community's perspective (Draper, Woosnam, & Norman, 2011). Zhou (2014) has also

stated same, whilst examining the online image of a rural destination by locals and tourists. He has discussed that the dynamic image of China's oriental culture has been researched and discussed, but domestic Chinese cultural values and the Chinese perception of rurality have not been explored in tourism studies.

Traditional tourism research has focused on three main lines of research, the kind of impact communities receive from tourism (i.e., tangible vs. intangible, positive vs. negative; Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Woosnam et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2014). Secondly, the communities' attitudes and personal benefits from tourism development are more researched (Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Hwang, Stewart, & Ko, 2012). Lastly, the most researched area is about residents support towards tourism developments (Wang & Pfister, 2008; Brida, Osti & Faccioli, 2011). In addition, a few studies have highlighted the perceived level of local participation and involvement in tourism activities. For example, Liu (2006) has focused on the community's concerns through involvement in rural tourism and their capacity to absorb tourism development. The current research study takes a more holistic approach, by extending to the realm of integrating the local communities' perspective into the positioning a destination. The importance of the community's perspective in positioning is supported by research conducted by studies like, Tkaczynski, Hastings, and Beaumont, (2006), the researchers that have highlighted the connection between tourists (as centre of attraction) in the demand side and residents (as hosts) on the supply side. Their study have argued that a destination needs to be positioned on the attributes that are destination's strength and meaningful to tourists and the lastly can be fulfilled by tourism operators. This also concurs with the findings of Ezeuduji and Rid (2011), who state that to ensure the success of rural

tourism development, the perspective of rural communities needs to be thoroughly investigated.

Nonetheless there appears to be a gap in the existing literature, for two main reasons: Firstly, to the best of our knowledge, there is no empirical study that examines the local community's perspective (by using predictors such as motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment and infrastructure). Secondly, the relationship between these predictors with the positioning attributes (i.e. environmental attributes, social and cultural attributes, entertainment attributes, authentic rural tourism and learning attributes) has also not been explored before. In the tourism literature, the community's perspective, such as their motivation, has been largely studied by associating it with the starting up a tourism business (e.g., Schroeder, 2004; McKercher, Ho & du Cros, 2005; Zhao et al., 2011; Ahmad et al., 2014). Moreover, community attachment and involvement have been studied as the communities association with the land and people, and its effect on their support for tourism development (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Gu & Ryan, 2008; Nicholas et al., 2009; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Lee, 2013; Wang & Xu, 2015). Community readiness has been examined on various key aspects associated with tourism, such as local capacity to absorb tourism developments (Liu, 2006), and the level of resilience to ensure the homestay operators sustainability in the market (Ghapar, Norain & Jamal, 2016). The current research extends the boundaries by integrating the related determinants into a holistic framework, to explore the relationship between the community's perspectives and the positioning attributes.

In addition, the community's perspective and influence on image formation of a tourism

destination has been rarely studied, particularly in rural tourism where the local community is part of the attraction. Hence, the current research covers this gap by examining positioning attributes of rural tourism destinations, specifically in Sarawak, Malaysia. It is important to know the factors that influence the community's relationship with the perceived image, as it will further affect their support for the destination. Lack of local community inclusion in planning and decision making of tourism programs is an issue in Malaysia (Johari et al., 2015). The local communities are supportive of the tourism industry, yet they also demand to be considered as equal partners with the government in decision making for their community and tourism activities in their locality (Johari et al., 2015). Hence, the current research differs from previous research in many aspects, and intends to investigate the local community's views and concerns in positioning their place as a tourism destination. In the next section, the justification of the theoretical framework is presented, to indicate the relationship between the constructs and aid in the understanding of the research hypotheses.

2.7.2 Justification for the Studied Variables

It might be expected that the local community's perceived image for positioning of their home as a rural tourism destination is important, as tourists' appeal lies mainly in the heritage, nature, culture, local knowledge and most importantly natural hospitality of the local people (Rid, Ezeuduji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014). The inclusion of local perspectives, such as the communities' motivation, readiness, attachment, involvement, and local infrastructure, can be used to anticipate rural tourism destination positioning. This understanding can be helpful in lessening the negative impact of external factors, which are mostly due to a lack of awareness (Butler & Hinch, 2010).

According to the SET, people are likely to base their attitude (i.e., motivation, readiness, attachment, involvement, and sharing local infrastructure) on the benefits from an exchange of rewards and costs (i.e., sharing their home, environment, culture, and social life). The local community may oppose the tourism initiatives if the cost of tourism development outweighs the benefits (Gursoy et al., 2002). Hence SET appears to be as most appropriate theory to explain local communities' perspective based on tangible and intangible exchange of resources between them and tourists to position tourism destination.

To get a complete sense of the community's standpoint towards tourism, it is essential to understand all the main aspects that could affect their decision to support or reject certain tourism developments. The main factor believed to affect the community's perception of tourism in their area is their motivation to be in this business. (Fodness, 1994) states that motivation is the reason for a particular behaviour. Understanding motivation refers to recognizing forces that initiate, direct, and sustain human behaviour (Iso-Ahola, 1999). For rural communities, one of the main motivations is to gain personal satisfaction from the tourism and to engage in enjoyable tasks (Ahmad et al., 2014). This shows the fact that how motivation factors of local community's influence tourism in a destination, which ultimately affects how they perceive their area as a tourism destination.

Furthermore, it is important for the local community to be ready for the tourism business and dealing with tourists. Stetic (2012) has emphasized that lacking preparation for managing day to day tourism tasks affects the overall service quality and ultimately the tourists satisfaction. Hall, Kirkpatrick, and Mitchell (2005), stated that limited skills and knowledge of tourism

could contribute to false expectations about the benefits of tourism, a lack of preparedness for the change associated with tourism, and limits opportunities. Readiness for the tourism is not only important for members who are directly involved in a tourism business (e.g., homestay operators), but for the local community as a whole.

There are plenty of studies to show that community involvement plays a significant role in a successful tourism destination. The current research considers involvement as greater local participation and decision-making relating to tourism. A study done by Andriotis and Vaughan (2003) found the local community is often absent from the decision-making processes that affect their lives. Lee (2013) has measured community involvement together with attachment to study the influence on level of community support for sustainable tourism. Community involvement is essential for the positive perception of tourism by the local community because the more they are involved the more opportunities they will get to benefit from the tourism activities (Sebele, 2010; Nicely & Sydnor, 2015).

Community attachment has also been identified as one of the main factors to influence the communities' support and positive attitude towards tourism. Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, and Vogt, (2005) have examined resident attachment to explore their perceptions of tourism impact. Harrill (2004) has showed that strongly attached residents rated the positive dimension of tourism in their community.

An absence of basic infrastructure can have adverse effects on the promotion of a place as a tourism destination (Jovanović & Ilić, 2016). Infrastructure should be based on the concept of 'shared usage', meaning that the facilities provided are being shared by the locals as well as

the travellers or other users (Jusoh & Marzuki, 2014). This is highly relevant in rural tourism, where tourists often stay at the same house with the host and share their daily life activities. Thus infrastructure is also important for forming friendly and positive attitudes by the local community towards tourists.

Positioning is one of the most effective tools in tourism marketing. It provides a competitive edge to a destination that is trying to convey its attractiveness to the target market. Positioning theory indicates that products with good marketing strategies will attract more consumers (Ries & Trout, 2001). The inclusion of local perspectives in the marketing strategy will transform it to be even more effective, as the community more intimately knows the strong attributes that can be positioned as unique selling proposition for a destination. Hence, positioning theory helps here, to be popular in today's over-communicated world, by creating an image that differentiates it from other competing brands in the same product category. Other authors (Calantone, Di Benetto, Hakam & Bojanic, 1989; Echtner & Ritchie, 2003) argue that image formation is the key component of an effective positioning strategy.

The present framework proposes that the local community's perspective is an independent variable (comprising of motivation, readiness, attachment, involvement and local infrastructure in rural destinations) that affects the dependent variable positioning of rural tourism destination (comprising of environmental attributes, social and cultural attributes, entertainment, attachment, involvement and learning attributes). The current research has built conceptual links between these constructs and we that the local community's perspective and the positioning of a rural tourism destination are strongly related to each other. The next

section presents the development of hypotheses to show the assumed relationship between independent and dependent variables for the current study.

2.8 Development of Research Hypotheses

The primary purpose of the current research is to explore the relationship between the positioning of rural tourism and the local community's perspectives of rural tourism. In the following section, we will define the variables in detail with support from the previous literature. The community's perspective on tourism activities, discusses community's attitude towards tourism development and positioning of their place as tourism site. Five distinctive and independent variables will measure it, namely motivation for rural tourism, involvement in rural tourism, attachment to the community, readiness for rural tourism, and local infrastructure. The perceived positioning by the local community entails five dependent variables, namely environmental attributes, social and cultural attributes, entertainment attributes, authentic rural experience, and learning attributes.

2.8.1 Community Motivation and Positioning

According to Getz and Carlsen, (2000); Timothy and Tosun, (2003); and Kim and Butler, (2015) the local community's diverse motivations have contributed towards the promotion of their place as tourism destination and building a destination image. Motivation is one an important aspects of the community's perspective, as it can affect the nature and performance of the success of this sector. Other researchers (such as Gladstone & Morris, 2000; McGehee

& Kim, 2004; Lynch, McIntosh, & Tucker, 2009) identified rural community's motivation as a primary reason to get social interest, lifestyle support, and the pursuit of growth.

Studies in North Dakota by Schroeder (2004) and in Montana by Nickerson, Black, and McCool (2001) found that the local community's interactions with guests and fostered personal relationships with tourists were deemed as life enriching experiences, which in turns affected their motivation to develop a more successful image of their destination. Ahmad, Jabeen, and Khan, (2014) conducted a study with 1250 homestay entrepreneurs in Malaysia, to explore their primary motivations to enter in the tourism business. The highly rated motivations were social benefits, such as applying their skills, increasing their knowledge, and enjoyable things to do with tourists in the homestay business. Another study, conducted with Mah Meri, an indigenous community of Malaysia, revealed that the preservation of authentic local culture was a main motivating factor for local community; this in turn resulted in them promoting their village as a tourism destination (Kunasekaran et al., 2013). Furthermore, Cooper (1998) asserts that the local community's motivation plays a major role in the perceived positioning of a rural tourism destination. Thompson (2004) highlighted that identity preservation, leveraging on local resources, social and cultural structures are the drivers that motivate the local community to get involved in tourism; and these are also features of a successful tourism destination. Therefore, we hypothesized that the community's motivations would have a positive impact on the positioning of a rural tourism destination.

H1: The local community's motivation positively affects the positioning of a rural tourism destination

Razzaq et al., (2011) conducted a study with 62 homestay and tourism operators in Johor Malaysia. They found that after the economic factors, environmental factors were the main motivational factor for community members to join the homestay program. Camelia, Marius-Răzvan, Cristi, and Ana-Irina (2012) identify that the rural community's positive motivation to initiate tourism enterprises helps protect the destinations natural environment, as well as promote the place as a nature tourism destination. Furthermore, Stetic (2012) have found positive and strong relationship between local community's motivation to participtae in the decision making process for their place as a tourism destination. The destination development is the key to the preservation of the natural environment and the cultural resources that tourism depends on. Blašková and Blaško, (2008) add to the comprehension of the relationship between positioning of a destination and maintaining the motivation of the local communities for its projected image. Further, Tay and Chan (2013) proposes a theoretical framework based on the push and pull theory to present the relationship between motivation factors of tourism tour operators in destinations and their role in developing a rural destination positioning. Through qualitative data collection, that study found that reducing the adverse environmental impacts was one of the motivations for local tour operators. Muhanna (2006) highlights the importance of sustainable tourism development and argued that, in many tourism projects the conservation of the natural, cultural and built environment is an important motivation for the initiation of a project. The above arguments imply that local motivation in tourism projects contribute positively to environmental preservation. Hence, we derived a sub-hypothesis regarding the community's motivation and the environmental attributes (H1a).

H1a: The local community's motivation positively affects the environmental attributes of positioning a rural tourism destination.

Agyeiwaah, Akyeampong, and Amenumey (2013) found strong relation between destination image and local community's motivation to showcase their social and culture aspect of their daily life, as a key aspect of the rural tourism destination image. Further Ibrahim and Razzaq (2010) investigate the influence of local community's motivation regarding their sharing of social and cultural life with tourism to position a destination. Moreover, they also found that homestay facilities are family units to enhance social and cultural interactions between the hosts and guests. Stetic (2012) found various motivations in rural communities to be involved in tourism developments, such as promoting, historical monuments, history, rest and recreation, customs, and folklore. These characteristics have the different potential to take a unique form of tourism product in a particular destination. As such, this implies that the local community's motivation has a positive effect on the social and cultural attributes of a destination. Hence we formulated another sub-hypothesis (H1b).

H1b: The local community's motivation positively affects the social and cultural attributes of positioning a rural tourism destination.

A study by Jaafar, Abdul-Aziz, Maideen, and Mohd (2011) found that entrepreneurs in the Malaysian tourism industry were more motivated to promote their place as a tourism service provider and a place of entertainment and recreation such as healthy lifestyle, cultural shows, dance performances and fun guided tours. Simonsen (2005) concluded that the motivations of local entrepreneurs to be involved in tourism are based on a mixture of economic aims and

social objectives, one of which was entertainment. Guo and Sun (2016) studied ways to improve sustainability of rural tourism in China. They found that recreational activities that are arranged by local communities, such as folk activities, traditional festivals, marriages, and games, increased tourist visits, improved the destination image, and positively affected the local community's motivation. Similarly, local festivals that are organized by local communities with the support from regional government attract large numbers of visitors, create opportunities of entertainment and cultural exhibitions, and ultimately result in the economic growth of the region (Tao, 2006). Therefore, the local community's motivation has a positive effect on the entertainment attributes of a destination. This finding is also in line with Cohen (1979); Pearce (1981), who argued that opportunity to share culture and history, create better awareness of culture among locals and visitors. Hence we formulated a third sub-hypothesis (H1c).

H1c: The local community's motivation positively affects the entertainment attributes of positioning a rural tourism destination.

Ollenburg (2007) highlighted the positive impact of local community motivation with the unique positioning of their destination that is based on sharing their traditional rural experience with visitors. He has stated that several motivations of farm tourism business owners that included tangible benefits, such as increased earning, profit and the intangible benefits play a major role in tourism. Mroczek (2016) elaborates the two main reasons that motivate Australian Aboriginal communities to position their place based on authentic cultural experiences for tourism. First, it serves their own interests of gaining economic

benefits. However, secondly they use it as a process to resist further appropriation and disrespect of their culture. Another milestone example, to highlight the importance of local community motivation to give a unique position to their place, is set by Kelabits, who developed Malaysia's first community museum and cultural centre (Teripun) in Bario to promote an authentic cultural experience (BorneoPost Online, 2016). Furthermore, in Gambia the community's main motivation for the promotion of cultural tourism is the presentation of authentic rural experience, such as cultural dances, handicrafts, and traditional storytelling (Rid, Ezeuduji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014). This implies that a successful authentic rural experience is greatly affected by the local community's motivation to preserve and promote their culture and heritage. Thus, we formulated out forth sub-hypothesis (H1d).

H1d: The local community's motivation positively affects the authentic rural experience of positioning a rural tourism destination.

Besculides et al., (2002) reported the strong relationship between the local community motivations to position their place based on learning attribute. Their study explored that host communities see tourism as a means of helping the young generation to learn local culture, as well as share and preserve their traditional folklore with the tourists. This in turn could also have a great impact on the learning interest of tourists. Simonsen (2005) have argued that tourists are always interested to see and learn about art and culture. Another example of relation between local community motivation and learning attributes was reported by UNESCO (2008). The results of a survey conducted in Nalan (Lao People's Democratic Republic), showed that both the hosts and the tourists are interested in opportunities of

cultural exchange; both can learn about the very different lifestyles they lead, which is both enjoyable and educational. Pietilä (2011) examined the factors that motivate the hosts of CouchSurfing (an online community) in Spain. The research findings reveal that the majority of CouchSurfers are hosting because of social and cultural reason, to make friendships, engage in a cultural exchange, and to learn something from the interaction with guest. Hicks and Kellogg (2016) have also added comprehension the relation between community motivation and exchange knowledge with tourists. They conducted focus group discussions with local communities in Belize to found that tourism helps exchange knowledge as tourists learn things in the community and the community learns from the tourists. As a result, we frame that the local community's motivation has a positive effect on the learning attributes and can make a successful image of a destination in a particular context. Thus, regarding the community's motivation we developed a final sub-hypothesis (H1e).

H1e: The local community's motivation positively affects the learning attributes of positioning a rural tourism destination.

2.8.2 Community Readiness and Positioning

Based on Neopopulist theory, Scheyvens (2002) argued that local communities should be central to tourism planning and management, as they are the largest beneficiaries of tourism development. In past research, community readiness has been highlighted as significantly related to the success of a rural tourism destination and the marketing thereof (Bourke & Luloff, 1996; Reid, Mair, & George, 2004; Moscardo, 2008). The community's readiness comprises of two main components: capacity and infrastructure. Lo et al., (2012) states that

understanding the customers' expectation is a major problem that rural communities face; this could result in poor service quality. Rashid, Hadi, Mustafa, Hamzah, and Khalifah (2012) presented a case study in which they established a community capacity-building program to cater to the development and evolution of community-based tourism at Miso Walai, Kinabatangan, Sabah. The authors argued that community readiness and capacity building are essential aspects that must be addressed by the stakeholders to ensure the better positioning of tourism. This is further supported by Balint (2006), who states that a high level of competency and skills to achieve relevant tourism goals are essential for local residents and hosts involved in tourism. On a similar note Stetic (2012) and Albayrak, Caber, Hutcheson, and Moutinho (2016) revealed that a lack of preparations for managing day to day tourism related tasks affects the overall service quality and tourist satisfaction. According to Moscardo (2008), without community readiness, tourism development at the community level has negative outcomes. Therefore, we formulated the following hypothesis.

H2: The local community's readiness positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination

Halpenny (2010) recognise the importance of community's readiness for the success of tourism in more natural destination in terms of commitment, capacity, and desire to protect and care for that place. Mbaiwa (2011) and Liu et al., (2014) concluded that the economic benefits from tourism could drive the local community's positive behaviour with regard to the environment. Reason for this is that compared with other industries tourism appears to be more attractive for regional economic improvement as it brings very few negative

environmental consequences. Furthermore, Jones (2005) examined the local community readiness for tourism in Gambia and found that poor management practices, inabilities, and unpreparedness are the top challenges that could threaten and harm the local community's environment. He further explored strong relation between processes of readiness in local people that leads to development of community-based tourism and position Gambia as an ecotourism destination. Moreover, research findings by Sunkar, Meilani, and Muntasib (2015) reveal the local community's capacity and readiness to successfully protect their natural resources is at the front of tourism challenges. According to their study, tourism operators need support from their community to provide excellent tourism services and to help manage and protect the environment. Thus, we formulated a sub-hypothesis regarding the environmental attributes.

H2a: The local community's readiness positively affects environmental attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

According to Dahles (2013), rural tourism cannot be successful unless the locals are ready to present and share their culture and daily life with tourists. Liu (2006) also found strong evident of importance of local commuity's capabilities and readiness for the successful and unique positioning of a destination. He considered unfamiliarity and lack of awareness as the main reasons for local communities to not support rural tourism development. Liu (2006) further discovers that training for rural tourism operators in the Malaysia can help in inter-cultural understanding and compliance to cultural differences of visitors, that in turns build a clear destination position. Furthermore, there is significant evidence to link the readiness of tourism operators and the intangible aspects of rural tourism, such as the local community's

social and cultural life (Figueiredo & Raschi, 2012). In other words, it is identified here that the offering of scenic tours, engaging rural tourism activities, and outdoor adventures have a strong relation with the residence of that place and without each other rural tourism is not complete. Zhou (2014) found that a successful rural tourism image could be constructed by combining tangible aspects of rurality with community support and readiness to present a rural culture and lifestyle. As a result, the local community's readiness has a positive effect on the social and cultural attraction of a rural tourism destination. Thus we formulated another sub-hypothesis.

H2b: The local community's readiness positively affects social & cultural attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

The local community's readiness has a direct effect on creating attractive and valuable activities to promote the destination image. If the soft skills of the host are not trained properly than it may result in a negative image and dissatisfied tourists. Supporting this, Russell and Faulkner (2004) have discussed that the lack of readiness of the local people for tourism can result in many problems, such as the lack of creativity in formulating products, a diminishing uniqueness in rurality, and deteriorating rural atmosphere. Highlighting the importance of recreational activities provided by local residents, Davenport, Sames, Bussey, Pradhanaga, Emery, and Jakes (2013) have debated that community events, such as music festivals and games, entertain tourists and also bring the community closer together. Similarly, Kastenholz, Carneiro, Peixeira Marques, and Lima (2012) have examinedd the readiness of local communities to offer experience related to their heritage and traditions to tourists. They conclude that social, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of the rural tourism

experience are important determinants shared by a community. As such, a third sub-hypothesis was formulated.

H2c: The local community's readiness positively affects entertainment attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

Researchers such as Govers and Go (2004); Hosany, Ekinci, and Uysal (2006) highlight the importance of local community's readiness in integrating a destination image with destination identity and personality. This ultimately expands the authentic rural experience concept to the representation, generation, and reproduction of cultural identity. Zhou (2014) examined the positioning and projection of a destination image and has emphasized rural locality (landscape, natural environment), representations of the rural community (socio-economic, political, and cultural features), and the everyday lives of the rural population. According to him, these three components make the rural experience authentic for tourists. Moreover, according to Cai, (2011) local community readiness has an essential part in the whole process, of satisfied rural experience for tourists and thus their capacity to absorb tourism development and promote a pure rural tourism practice is inter-related. To construct a destination identity that represents localized features and lifestyles, it is necessary to understand the role of rurality in rural tourism. The term "rurality" is used to capture generalized rural features; which are then reproduced for tourists' interests. In Sarawak there are numerous ethnic groups, all with their own unique identity to provide a traditional rural experience. This can be used as a unique selling proposition to position a particular destination. However, it is a pre-requisite for the local communities to have capacity building, to be able to present this uniqueness to the tourists. Thus, the readiness of the local community is essential to give the experience of a rural destination, and hence we formulated the following sub-hypothesis.

H2d: The local community's readiness positively affects authentic rural experience of positioning rural tourism destination.

The local community is considered the owner of the culture and the natural resources that are crucial for rural tourism. They are also responsible for providing and delivering services to tourists and maintaining facilities and other tourism products and resources (Kamarudin, Ngah, Wahid, & Razak, 2015). The community's capacity and support is important to uphold the true objectives of the tourism products. Their willingness and ability to share activities, like teaching local dances, language, handicrafts, or cooking food, needs to be considered when planning tourism activities. Falk and Harrison (1998) have found that in regional Australia, teaching arts and crafts to the tourists has contributed to the overall well-being of the community. Locally build craft club, has assembled individual skills, knowledge and values within its group framework to produce economic benefits for the locals and attractions for the tourists. Hence hypothesis H2e was formulated

H2e: The local community's readiness positively affects learning attributes of positioning rural tourism destination

2.8.3 Community Involvement and Positioning

A number of studies have indicated that the local community's involvement is a vital factor in tourism development and image building (Nicholas et al., 2009, Dogan Gursoy et al., 2010; Nicely & Sydnor, 2015). Community involvement describes the extent to which residents are involved in sharing issues about their lives with their communities (Lee, 2012). Ertuna and

Kirbas (2012) describe involvement as a critical requirement for the sustainable growth of rural tourism. For sustainable tourism, the business community should seek input from the local residents, so they can voice their concerns and preferences regarding tourism development and planning (Edgell et al., 2008). Giving local communities a voice in the decision-making and engaging them in tourism planning results in their support for tourism initiatives (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005; Kumar, Gill, & Kunasekaran, 2012). Furthermore, active inclusion of the local community in tourism developments, make it possible for the tourism revenue to reach the communities; they can then distribute it according to their own wishes. Wilson et al., (2001) found that good communication channels between local community members and tourism planners are very helpful to achieve tourism sustainability. Aref (2010) argues that there is positive relationship between involvement, community support, and tourism destination images. A case study on rural tourism in Kedah, does not support the assumptions that consider the community support as an ultimate outcome of the tourism project; the socio-economic impacts are affected because of the local community's involvement, as well as their incapacity to address the needs of new employment market brought by tourism (Liu, 2006). Choo and Jamal (2009) reported that a sustainable tourism industry could not be established without the cooperation, support, and participation of communities. From the existing literature, we conclude that the community's involvement is an important factor in community-based tourism development, and that would have a positive relationship with the positioning strategies of a rural tourism destination. Therefore, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

H3: The local community's involvement positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination.

Sampaio, Thomas, and Font (2012) stated that actively involving the local residents in the conservation of environmental resources in tourism has both economic and personal benefits and also helping in better and clear position of that destination. Zhong, Deng, Song, and Ding (2011) suggested that protecting and managing the tourism environment, via appropriate control and involvement from local residents, will bring sustainability to the destinations resources. Furthermore, it will also help tourism stakeholders to unite the planning and management of tourism resources and implementation of responsibilities. The world's indigenous communities need to be given a bigger role in climate stabilization (theguardian, 2016). Highlighting the same concern, the United Nation Environment Programme has also recommended that local people in natural tourism areas should be involved in safeguarding biodiversity in tourist hotspots. The UN has emphasized that the best way to protect sensitive, biodiversity-rich areas from the negative impact of tourism is to encourage local management of wildlife and nature (UNEP, 2016). Thus, hypothesis, H3a was formulated.

H3a: The local community's involvement positively affects environmental attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

According to Sebele (2010) and Nicely and Sydnor (2015) the local community's involvement in tourism planning results in improved social and cultural conservation. It also brings more opportunities for the residents, to encourage community ownership, livelihood security, and efficient conflict resolution. Furthermore, Garrod, Wornell, and Youell (2006)

have also found the significance of local community involvement that have the capacity to revitalize the culture and heritage of rural communities, and represent the true image to the tourists of local people, societies, and lifestyles. Kunasekaran et al., (2013) presented a case study of rural tourism in an indigenous community of Malaysia. The authors found that the community‘s involvement rejuvenated their indigenous identity and promoted local cultural products, such as woodcarvings, weavings, the Main Jo’oh dance, and the Ari Moyang festival. Therefore, the involvement of local people in tourism for promoting and representing rurality needs to be further understood. Hence hypothesis H3b was formulated.

H3b: The local community’s involvement positively affects social & cultural attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

Rural tourism combines different forms of tourism products, such as outdoor and indoor recreational activities, agritourism, tour guides, trekking, kayaking, and handicrafts. Therefore it represents an opportunity for the involvement of different segments of the local community to participate in the implementation of tourism development (Stetic, 2012). The more involvement of local people in different activities, the more attractive the image of a destination would be. Johannesson et al., (2003) found that if the social capital of a community was high, then its residents were eager to develop a tourism investment strategy and exert the effort to make the place attractive, serve the visitors well, keep the environment comfortable and clean, and were open for sharing and learning. Moreover, Simonsen (2005) has revealed in his findings that Aboriginal leaders in Australia often view tourism as a way of improving the economic and political status of their communities, whilst at the same time

minimising the accompanying social, environmental, and cultural cost. Thus, hypothesis H3c was formulated.

H3c: Local community's involvement positively affects entertainment attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

Okazaki (2008) has stated that active involvement of the local community in the tourism planning process is a way of implementing sustainable tourism and projecting the right image. Failure to do so might result in negative attitudes towards tourists, as local issues may have a direct influence on the tourist experience (Pearce, 1994). Rural tourism and local communities are strongly inter-related, as the image of tourism is based on the people and their assets such as natural environment, infrastructure, and other local facilities (Murphy, 1985). Hence, local involvement in tourism activities is essential to provide the ideal tourism experience to tourists. This is also in line with the findings of Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Ahmad, and Barghi (2017), who found that bringing awareness about the community's effective participation could improve the overall tourism image, in addition to conserving the local resources. To explore a unique positioning for rural sub-Saharan Africa, Ezeuduji (2015) suggested focusing on event-based rural tourism. Locals can organize different events for tourists, which will lead to a unique rural tourism experience for tourists. According to the study, involving residents in event-based tourism activities would create a balance between implementing local values and community ownership and the need to utilize top-down resources and funding and other resources from government. Thus, hypothesis H3d was formulated

H3d: The local community's involvement positively affects authentic rural experience of positioning rural tourism destination.

A study conducted with the First Nations (indigenous people) of Canada, presented rural tourism as a good way to promote and preserve local culture, learning, heritage, and customs if the tourism strategy involves the right people and stakeholders (Besemenji et al., 2011). According to Kontogeorgopoulos, Churyen, and Duangsaeng, (2014) some local communities have made education and learning, rather than leisure and recreation, the primary focal points of the community-based tourism in Thailand. Community-based tourism has become an important component of the domestic tourism market in Thailand; however, some rural communities struggle to plan, initiate, and sustain tourism projects. Thus, hypothesis H3e was formulated.

H3e: The local community's involvement positively affects learning attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

2.8.4 Community Attachment and Positioning

Community attachment reflects an individual's sense of belonging to a community (Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974). Various studies have focused on community's attachment relating to tourism development. For example, McCool and Martin (1994) reported that strongly attached residents rated the positive dimensions of tourism in their community. Williams, McDonald, Riden and Uysal (1995) found that residents with higher levels of attachment were more supportive of tourism developments. Community attachment is a complex construct that assesses the attitudes of the local residents and is demonstrated through the

concepts of community identity, community dependence, social bonding within a community, and affective responses to feelings regarding a community (Kyle, Mowen, & Tarrant, 2004). Previous research has found a significant relationship between community attachment and the community's support for tourism development (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Gu & Ryan, 2008; Nicholas, et al., 2009; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Lee, 2013; Wang & Xu, 2015). In line with the same arguments, (Nursey-Bray & Rist, 2009; Smith, Scherrer, & Dowling, 2009) have found indigenous community's attachments to preserve their culture, protection of spiritual and biodiversity through tourism. Delivery of such benefits can positively influence the local perceptions of a protected area and its tourism (Figgis & Bushell, 2007; Brockington, Duffy, & Igoe, 2008). The local community's attachment to their place and people is important for rural tourism development. Park (2012) emphasizes that rural tourism development necessitates close interaction between local residents, through mutual trust, networks, norms and social relations. Social and economic factors, such as community attachment, length of residence in an area, and economic dependency on tourism, can influence resident perceptions of and attitudes towards tourism. Based on the above discussion, we propose the following propositions:

H4: The local community's attachment positively affects the positioning of the rural tourism destination.

Manzo and Perkins (2006) have stated that the community's attachment to their own place and environment can make them adopt a certain protective behaviour towards the efficient use of these resources. Other researchers such as Walker and Ryan (2008) and Lee (2011) have

stated that strong sense of belonging in rural communities towards their environment is one of the main reason for their support of rural tourism and their willingness to share their environment with the tourists. Furthermore, Sunlu (2003) highlight the local community attitude, creating careful behaviour and a sense of shared responsibility towards their place. He believes that the use of natural and man-made resources in a rural destination is directly related to the local community attachment with this two type of resources. Thus hypothesis H4a was formulated.

H4a: The local community's attachment positively affects environmental attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

Rural communities have a strong attachment to their culture, as revealed by Kunasekaran et al., (2013), from Mah Meri indigenous community, who claims to have ideas, design and instructions to do a specific sculpture from ancestors in their dreams. Underlining the importance of the community's attachment to their culture in a Chinese rural destination, Zhou (2014) explained that Wuyuan's rural features contain both practical and idealized characteristics. Wuyuan's well-preserved rurality, expressed in its old architecture, natural resources, and agriculture-based lifestyle, gave it a unique position for tourism attraction. Other than, soft aspects of local community attachment, other tangible items such as souvenirs with rural features, handicraft, local special food are also important as tourists want to buy to keep them as a memory (Garau, (2015). Whereas Wright and Annes (2014) describe a deep-rooted rurality in people's lives and the close relationship with their hometown, which

makes them to visit a rural destination. Therefore, planning and marketing rural tourism could utilize the "rural complex" to improve outcomes. Thus, hypothesis H4b was formulated.

H4b: The local community's attachment positively affects social & cultural attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

The Kelabits, an ethnic minority group in Sarawak, Malaysia, have set up a Teripun also known as the Kelabit community museum and cultural centre in Bario. They have achieved this with the help of the government and Rurum Kelabit Sarawak (RKS), with the aim of preserving and representing the Kelabit culture. RKS is a peak-body that represents the least populous indigenous ethnic group of the Malaysian state of Sarawak (Sweet & Kelly, 2014; BorneoPost Online, 2016). It is Malaysia's first community museum. Another initiative showing the local community's attachment to their culture and heritage is the slow food festival, which is also on the Malaysian Tourism Calendar. This festival exhibits the unique food, farming, forest and cultural heritage of Bario. The Kelabit longhouse communities cook delicious organic food for visitors and locals. According to a study, tourism encourages local communities to organize recreational and entertainment facilities for tourists coming to their destination (Tovar & Lockwood, 2008). Furthermore, tourism helps develop an understanding of cultural identity, and promotes the preservation and revival of traditional arts, culture, and crafts (Kim, 2002; McGehee, Andereck, & Vogt, 2002). Thus hypothesis H4c was formulated.

H4c: The local community's attachment positively affects entertainment attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

Besculides et al., (2002) stated that Hispanic residents of an indigenous tribe felt strong cultural benefits for their community due to tourism developments. This is also in line with the findings of Sher, Bagul, and Din, (2015) who found that the benefits of tourism to the host community might include reciprocity, community pride, tolerance, and a stronger sense of ethnic identity. This implies that communities, who feel that tourism can benefit their people and place, are more likely to support tourism and view it as a positive development. Due to their strong bonding with their unique preserved culture and sustainable living, indigenous attractions are increasingly popular in the tourism market (Butler & Hinch, 2007). Their attachment shapes the identities of many indigenous people and can often be harnessed to help the local economy through tourism development (Wu, Wall, & Tsou, 2014). Thus hypothesis H4d was formulated.

H4d: The local community's attachment positively affects authentic rural experience of positioning rural tourism destination.

The increasing competition for tourists has challenged the rural tourism operators to adopt new ways to attract and entertain tourists (Komppula, 2014). For example, some communities offer to prepare regionally distinctive food and drinks, as visitors want to appreciate and learn the origins of their food and drink (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2012). Besides this, a rural tourism product home-stay creates an opportunity for visitors to get closer to the rural world, learn about culture, and heritage, and physical and spiritual rejuvenation (McIntosh, 2004; Bhuiyan, Siwar, and Ismail, 2013). The findings also support concepts by Koh and Hatten (2002), and Saxena and Ilbery (2008), von Friedrichs-Grängsjö (2003), regarding the personal attachment

of the tourism entrepreneurs to the area, as being important to promote their community and culture to the outer world. Thus hypothesis H4e was formulated.

H4e: The local community's attachment positively affects learning attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

2.8.5 Tourism Infrastructure and Positioning

Tourism has been found to improve local economy, business activities, and community infrastructure (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Tourism infrastructure is one of the essential facilities to affect the attractiveness of a destination (Prideaux, 2000; Hankinson, 2004). Jovanović and Ilić (2016) found that infrastructure contributes to the production and distribution of tourism services in remote destinations. For long-term sustainability of tourism, infrastructure is of special importance in providing the required services to tourists. When suggesting a positioning strategy, Sarma (2003), emphasized the attributes of physical infrastructure and the external influence on tourists to visit a destination. Moreover, Zhou (2014), have studied concept of rurality in online image of Wuyuan, China. His study has found that functional attributes and tourism infrastructure, such as the accommodation capacity, new facilities, and transportation system are important part of cognitive image. Many other researchers reported that local infrastructure seemed to be a prerequisite, not only for tourists but also for the residents in a destination (Andereck et al., 2005; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2012). To get positive results and significant economic impacts, the quality of tourism infrastructure at a destination is an important concern for tourism suppliers. According Swyngedouw (2000), the management of nexus between

tourism infrastructure, tourism activities, and local economy would result in positive and sustainable development of a tourism destination. Based on the literature discussed above, the following hypothesis was formulated.

H5: The local infrastructure positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination

Mulec and Wise (2013) have examined the competitiveness of the Vojvodina Region in Serbia, to assess its potential as a tourism destination. The results of their findings showed that tourism stakeholders and regional planners have to give special attention to physical infrastructures, as this affects the competitiveness of other inherited resources (natural and cultural/heritage resources) in the destination. Malik and Bhat (2015) have emphasized the negative impacts of unregulated tourism infrastructure and environmental degradation. For successful tourism development, not only destination natural and cultural components, but also supporting facilities, such as infrastructure, are important for tourism planning (Gunn, 1994; Pearce, 1997). Likewise, maintaining and improving the quality of these resources, particularly natural resources, is required for the continued sustainability of a destination (Inkeep, 1991; Go & Govers, 2000). Just like any other tourism product, environmental attractions in a destination require an efficient infrastructure management. For example, Gunung Mulu, Sarawak's largest national park and Malaysia's first World Heritage Area, contains caves with limestones and rocks (Sarawak Tourism, 2017). The caves provide outstanding scientific opportunities to study theories on the origins of cave faunas. To make these touristic places accessible for tourists, minimal and protective infrastructure, such as wooden walkway, has been built without harming the actual shape of these ancient resources.

Other than that, accommodation facilities have also been built for tourists Jusoh, Marzuki, and Shahrin (2014) state that infrastructure plays a vital role in supporting the historical elements of a place to ensure that the heritage is being preserved. Infrastructure is a main requirement in tourism destinations, to make the attractions accessible and enjoyable for the tourists and also to conserve it. This is inline with the arguments of Jusoh, Marzuki, and Shahrin (2014) that infrastructure plays a vital role in supporting the historical elements of a place to ensure that the heritage is being preserved. Thus hypothesis H5a was formulated.

H5a: The local infrastructure positively affects environmental attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

Tourism improves the efficiency of tangible and intangible resources of a destination, as tourists demand certain services to enjoy the experience of the selected tourist destination (Jovanović & Ivana, 2016). A study by Moore and Munro (2013) revealed that a lack of infrastructure in host indigenous community contributed to lack of local involvement and difficulties in managing tourists. Cucculelli and Goffi (2016) found that there is a strong relationship between the general infrastructures of a tourism destination and its image. In rural destinations, infrastructure can play a special role in presenting a unique image to the interested tourists, if it represents the traditional and cultural aspect of the local people. The role of infrastructure is important in creating a product experience for the tourist (Smith, 1994). Similarly, another study on a historical cultural heritage city, done by Jusoh, Marzuki, and Shahrin (2014) also support this argument. The tangible and intangible culture and heritage in Melaka, Peninsular Malaysia, has attracted tourists to come to this ancient place. The historical relics and other ancient infrastructure have been well preserved even though

there have been development changes since 500 years ago. However, findings of the study showed that poor maintenance, low quality of infrastructure, and shortage of financial allocation in infrastructure maintenance are issues in the protection and sustainability of this UNESCO world heritage site. Thus hypothesis H5b was formulated.

H5b: The local infrastructure positively affects social & cultural attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

Local infrastructure is essential in terms of arranging recreational activities, not only for tourists but also for the locals. The UNESCO world heritage site, George Town in Malaysian peninsular, presents a variety of recreational places, like the old streets and narrow lanes, past shrines decorated with strings of paper lanterns and fragrant shops selling Indian spices; it is a burgeoning street art scene, with modern cafes and fun bars. Another example is the Sarawak cultural village; a living museum presenting the social and cultural lifestyles of diverse ethnic groups in Sarawak. The village contains replica of longhouses, set around an artificial lake, staff live and work to preserve their heritage and cultural traditions. Eagles and McCool (2002) have revealed that visitor-related infrastructures enhance recreational experiences, appreciation, and learning opportunities. Various studies have proved the positive relation between local infrastructure for tourism development and the increased availability of recreational and entertainment facilities (Kim, 2002; Ko & Stewart, 2002; McGehee, Andereck, & Vogt, 2002; Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Tovar & Lockwood, 2008; Latkova & Vogt, 2012;). Thus hypothesis H5c was formulated.

H5c: Local infrastructure positively affects entertainment attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

After a tourist visit to a destination, the local infrastructure has a significant part in the tourist's overall experience. In rural destinations, the physical infrastructure is essential for experiencing the traditional and cultural activities as one of the most important factors of rural experience. Jovanović and Ivana (2016) shared that other than infrastructures such as hotels, motels, restaurants, transportation, and communication, one another type of infrastructure is also very important, that is cultural infrastructure, that provides physical space for culture activities and social gatherings. This is also obvious from the general representation and building of homestays in rural destinations in Sarawak, Malaysia. Few of the longhouses are oldest in the town, like Annah Rais Longhouse is the oldest Bidayuh longhouse to Bidayuh community, one of the ethnic communities in Sarawak, Malaysia (Sarawak Tourism Homestay Broucher). Thus hypothesis H5d was formulated.

H5d: The local infrastructure positively affects authentic rural experience of positioning rural tourism destination.

Learning in tourism can be used interchangeably with experiencing a new culture, life satisfaction, and wellness. Nowadays, tourism businesses have adapted to all these terms as part of the tourism products. For example, the primary purpose homestays is to experience the life in a kampung or traditional village, try home-cooking lesson, harvest fruits during fruit seasons, and play traditional games. The visitors can go to the padi field to harvest the rice or follow the host out to sea for fishing (Tourism Malaysia, 2017). One more purpose of tourism

related infrastructure is to provide a proper place to experience such activities. A study by Pyke, Hartwell, Blake, and Hemingway (2016), showed that in rural areas, infrastructure was one of the main barriers to encourage and promote well-being activities. Another aspect of learning is to know the local history through historical sites at a destination. The appropriate infrastructure at these places serves the purpose like appreciation and learning opportunities by providing the physical infrastructure necessary for them. For example, a signed trail interpreting natural history may be viewed as a facility necessary to enhance opportunities for learning and appreciation (Eagles & McCool, 2002). Thus hypothesis H5e was formulated.

H5e: The local infrastructure positively affects learning attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.

2.9 Summary

This chapter reviewed the existing literature related to rural tourism development and positioning of rural tourism products. Specifically, the literature review discussed the perceived image of rural tourism in Malaysia from the local community's perspective, and factors to influence this perception. It also focused on attributes of destination attractiveness, in order to identify the specific positioning strategy by incorporating local concerns. The chapter further examined the relationship between the community's perspectives and the perceived repositioning of a rural destination, by providing empirical evidence from literature in the Malaysian context. To support the study, three theories have been applied, namely the Positioning theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Theory of Participatory Development. Based on the existing literature, hypotheses have been developed in order to achieve the study

objectives mentioned in Chapter 1. The next chapter will describe the methodology used to test these hypotheses.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we explain the research methodology used to answer the proposed research questions. All components of the methodology, including the research paradigm, choice of methodology, data collection methods, and the analysis, are derived from the research questions. We relied on a survey method to collect relevant and primary data. This chapter will first discuss all research sites selected for the study, followed by the research design, survey instrument, designed survey questionnaire, questionnaire measures and their sources. Thereafter, this chapter will discuss the sample selection, data collection procedure, data analysis procedure, and last the statistical analysis techniques used to analyse the survey results.

3.2 Research Sites

The data collection survey was distributed in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak, located in Malaysian Borneo. East Malaysia was picked for data collection because it boasts natural beauty, with many rural areas that are rich in natural and cultural traditional elements. Sarawak shares terrestrial borders with the state of Sabah and Indonesian, Kalimantan. It is known as Bumi Kenyalang or "Land of the Hornbills", and has a large segment of the land covered by natural tropical rainforest. It has more than 40 sub-ethnic groups, each with its own distinct language, culture, and lifestyle. The list of adventure possibilities is as long as a

Sarawak proboscis monkey's nose, with everything from river kayaking to climbing and hiking through the region's dense forests. Data was collected from the targeted respondents who are currently staying and have been staying in rural tourism destinations in Sarawak for more than one year. Research sites were selected from Sarawak. According to data obtained from the office of Sarawak Tourism Board, till April 2016 the number of homestays in Sarawak increased to 35 (Falak, Chiun, & Wee, 2016). Choice of the criteria was based on two things. Firstly, diverse tourism destinations such as entertainment, adventure, ecotourism, and cultural tourism destination, and secondly with registered homestay. In total seven rural tourism destinations were selected, namely Annah Rais Kampung, Batang Sadong, Kampung Bako, Lundu, Gunung Gading, Sematan, Batang Lupar Sri Aman, and Rumah Patrick Homestay in Miri. The sites were selected from list of kampungs with homestays from the office of Sarawak Tourism Board (Falak, Chiun, & Wee, 2016). Furthermore the summary characteristics of the research sites are presented in Table 3.1.

There are numerous reasons to select these specific research sites. Firstly, these specific rural tourism destinations provide a dynamic variety of products, ranging from eco tourism destinations (Batang Sadong and Batang Lupar), entertainment destinations (Sematan) adventure destination (Gunung Gading) and cultural destinations (Annah Rais Homestay). These diverse destinations meet the selected positioning attributes of current research (i.e., environmental attributes, social and cultural attributes, entertainment attributes, authentic rural experience, and learning attributes). Further these sites also provide attractions such as natural environment, wild life, authentic rural culture, learning about new culture knowledge, and recreational activities.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of the Selected Research Sites

Location of Study / Characteristic	**Annah Rais Kampung**	**Batang Sadong**	**Kampung Bako**	**Gunung Gading, Lundu**	**Sematan**	**Batang Lupar**	**Rumah Patrick Homestay**
Location	Kuching	Kampung Kelka, Simunjan	Kampung Bako	Kampung Sebako, Lundu	Kampung Sungai Kidang	Sri Aman (Nanga Pelok and Lubok Antu)	Miri
Homestay Programme	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sarawak Listed Homestay	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Distance from City	60 km	170km	25km	98Km	120km	220km	90km
Accessibility	Road transport	Road transport	Road transport and via Boat	Road transport and via Boat	Road transport	Road Transport	Air and Road Transport
Local main Occupation	Farmers	Farmers	Farmers and Fishing	Farmers and Fishing	Fishing	Farmers	Farmers
Local Community ethnicity	Bidayuh	Malay	Malay	Bidayuh	Bidayuh	Iban, Malay, Chinese	Iban
Population	1000	500	800	450	500	250	600
Activity and Attractions	Waterfall Hot spring Fishing Bamboo rafting Trekking	River bank Wet markeational Park	Bako National Park Wild life Trekking and hiking Photography	Gunung Gading National park Raflessia flower Waterfall Jungle trekking Wild life	Beach Photography	Batu Nabau Cultural and historical attraction Tidal Bore Festival Oldest Chinese temple Alice Fort	Niah cave Bird nest Adventure caving Unique flora & fauna Cultural activities at longhouse

Moreover, the research sites accounts for more than 23% of the rural tourism destinations in Sarawak. Furthermore, the inclusion of the respondents from these research sites into the survey sample would provide perspectives of different ethnic groups living in these rural tourism destinations. This can better reflect the primary attributes to create unique image of their destination, as well as their perspective about their area. The next section presents the details of each of the destination research sites.

3.2.1 Annah Rais Kampung

Annah Rais Kampung is characterized by a beautiful limestone formation view, a scenic countryside fringed by hills and farms, mountain ranges, and palm oil estates (Samani, Maliki, Samat, & Marwan, 2016). One of the main attractions of this destination is an old well-preserved longhouse (Figure 3.1) that houses over 80 familie.



Figure 3.1: Village entrance of Annah Rais

The longhouse belongs to the second largest ethnic group in Sarawak, the Bidayuh tribe. This tribe is also known as Land Dayaks, who were once headhunters. Most of the people who live in Annah Rais kampung plant paddys, cocoa, and pepper for living, as well as fishing. Annah Rais longhouse has a written history of 175 years old (over 500 years old of unwritten history, which counting to approximately 8 generations old) to date.

3.2.2 Batang Sadong

Batang Sadong is 176 km away from Kuching in Sarawak. The selected village for the research was Kampung Kelka from Simunjan Town in Batang Sadong. There are many local beliefs about the name of this town. According to some local people the name, 'Simunjan' from the thriving coal mining community just before World War II (WWII) in late 1930s or early 1940s. The miners wanted to use the coal to cook meals and very often, the minerals would become damp due to the tropical rain. The damp coal was called 'arang simun' by Malay miners, due to the 'hu-jan' (rain). The combination of 'simun' and 'jan' is said to have given birth to the town's name (Kuok, Harun, & Shamsuddin, 2010). Ten minutes away from the town is the Gunung Ngeli Recreational Park, which requires management attention to become a tourism hotspot in Simunjan. There is also a steam (locomotive) train engine, which is a modern relic of the coal mining days that could whip up any historian's interest.

The recreational park needs some management attention to become a tourism hotspot in Simunjan. Other than that, the local wet market, at which fish and vegetables are sold, is also an attraction for visitors (Figure 3.2). There are a few homestays owned by local community members, and two budget homestays owned by the Simunjan District Office.



Figure 3.2: A shopkeeper in village Batang Sadong

3.2.3 Kampung Bako

Kampung Bako is almost 25 km away from Kuching. One of the primary attractions at Kampung Bako is Bako National Park (Figure. 3.3).

With its rainforest, abundant wildlife, jungle streams, waterfalls, interesting plant life, secluded beaches, panoramic rocky shoreline, bizarre rock formations, and an extensive network of trekking trails, Bako National Park offers visitors an excellent introduction to the rainforest and coastline of Borneo.



Figure 3.3: Boat travel to Kampung Bako

3.2.4 Lundu

Lundu is a small town in Southwest Sarawak, about 2 hours drive away from Kuching. The attractions in Lundu comprise of a few rows of shops, a small market, some attractive beaches, and kampong houses that are inhabited by the local Bidayuh community (Figure 3.4). The main attraction in Lundu is Gunung Gading National Park. Gunung Gading is home to the world's largest flower, the Rafflesia, which can grow up to one metre in diameter. The Waterfall trail in the park offers the shortest walk winding its way up through the forest past a series of waterfalls



Figure 3.4: Entrance of Gunung Gading National Park Lundu

3.2.5 Sematan

Sematan is a settlement in the Lundu district of Sarawak, Malaysia. It lies approximately 120 km west from Kuching. Data was collected from two smaller villages, Kampungs Sungai Kidang and Kampung Sebako. The main ethnic group in Sematan is Bidayuh. Fishing and farming are the most common occupations in these villages. Sematan is renowned as having the cleanest beaches in the Sarawak. The fishing village at Teluk Melano, Lundu, has an established homestay host community. This attractive Malay fishing village is situated at the western tip of Sarawak. Pulau Talang-Talang Kecil, a part of the Talang-Satang National Park, is also located not too far off the coast of Sematan.

3.2.6 Batang Lupar, Sri Aman

Port Sri Aman is located 220 km from Kuching on the Batang (river) Lupar. Its population is culturally mixed, with mostly Iban, Malay and Chinese ethnic groups predominating. In the local language, Sri Aman means "town of peace", and therefore pigeons became the symbol of Sri Aman. It is famous for its benak or tidal bore that occurs daily; it is best viewed from the new Tidal Bore Observatory on the waterfront. The town also celebrates an annual Tidal Bore Festival, locally known as Pesta Benak. The 19th Century Tze Yin Khor Temple on the bank of the Batang Lupar is Sri Aman's oldest Chinese temple; it is unique as it has a green roof instead of the traditional red roof. The temple is built on a "live crab" feng shui site and the roof colour has been chosen to avoid "cooking" the crab.



Figure 3.5: Kampung Sri Aman

Other attractions include historical sites like Rumah Sri Aman, the former British Residency where the treaty ending the Communist Insurrection was signed in 1973, and Fort Alice, a Brooke-Era wooden fort built in 1864 (SarawakTourism, 2017). The Batang Ai National Park and Batu Nabau are among the tourism attractions in this place.

3.2.7 Rumah Patrick Homestay

Rumah Patrick Homestay is located 89 km away from the city of Miri. This is an 80-door longhouse of Iban origin and is a home to 600 local community members. The longhouse is located near the historical Niah Cave, which is one of the main attractions for tourists (Figure 3.6). Moreover, activities such as adventure caving, viewing unique flora and fauna, and cultural activities are also offered to the tourists.



Figure 3.6: Rumah Patrick homestay

3.3 Research Design, Sample, and Procedure

Population for research purpose can be defined as the population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications (Hungler & Polit, 1999). The population of interest in this research was both homestay operators and local community members in rural tourism destinations in Sarawak. The sample involved in this study is homestays operators, community people involve in tourism activities other than homestay, like tour guides, handicraft and local residents as well. All of these participants are drawn from different ethnic groups, occupations, education levels, and age categories. The eligibility criterion in this study was that the selected research area had to be rural area with registered and active homestay program. The sample size is an important consideration and can be crucial in determining the accuracy of the study's generalisations. A sample is a subset of a population selected to participate in the study, it is a fraction of the whole, selected to participate in the research project (Hungler & Polit, 1999). In general, Roscoe (1975) in (Sekaran, 2003) proposes rules of thumb for determining sample size as larger than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research; and for samples that are broken into sub-samples, a minimum sample size of 30 for each category is necessary. As this research study had been conducted in remote rural areas, with very less population, so to fulfil the rule of thumb, researcher has tried to target most of the population as a sample, to avoid sample error. As this research study was conducted in remote rural areas, with a small population, researcher tried to target most of the population to avoid a sampling error and have the most number of participants. According to Barclay, Higgins, and Thompson (1995), the "10 times" rule of thumb has been recognize as a guide to the minimum sample size which is necessary

to give sufficient power. This rule proposes a minimum sample size of ten times the maximum number of independent variables (Hair, Sarstedt, Pieper, & Ringle, 2012). As such, the minimum sample size for the current research would be 100 (10 x 10 times = 100) as there are 10 indicators (5 independent variables and 5 dependent variables).

There are two main types of sampling, probability and non-probability sampling. The difference between the two types is whether or not the sampling selection involves randomization. Randomization occurs when all members of the sampling frame have an equal opportunity of being selected for the study. First type of sampling, that is probability sampling, uses randomization and takes steps to ensure all members of a population have a chance of being selected. So keeping the nature and purpose of the study, second type of sampling, non-probability sampling or also called as judgemental sampling method was adopted. Non-probability sampling can be particularly useful in exploratory research, where the aim is to find out if a problem or issue even exists in a quick and inexpensive way. While in purposive sampling, there is a purpose in mind that seeks one or more specific predefined groups. Mentioned research site of rural tourism destinations were selected mainly from the Sarawak map and the updated list of Sarawak Tourism and Sarawak Homestay obtained from the official website and directory of Ministry of Tourism and Culture Malaysia, Sarawak Office (2015).

3.3.1 Data Collection Procedure

For the data collection, mainly quantitative method is employed. Quantitative methods are best when there is a need to make generalizations to the whole population or test a theory (Positioning Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and Theory of Participatory Development in

the current research study) with hypotheses. However, according to Coburn (2015) that in some rural areas, alone quantitative research may not get the required results so to additionally support the data collect via questionnaire, a few interviews with local community members were also conducted in the selected destinations. The purpose of the interviews was two folds. First to gather in-depth information and second to contextulize the selected variables into the setting of rural communities. The variables for the dependent variable, that is perceived positioning of rural tourism, presents tourism attractions in destinations, which are more tourist oriented. Hence to validate and localised the selected positioning attributes according to rural communities, and to take a more detailed insight into community's perspective on motivation, involvement, readiness, attachment, and infrastructure, the semi-structured interviewes were conducted.

For the quantitative data collection, in the first step, we approached Tuai Rumah, the local headman, to get his approval to conduct the survey in their community. Then, the researcher visited the rural tourism destinations and personally handed a formal letter explaining the research aims, together with the questionnaires, and with cover letter to seek their cooperation and to explain the objective of the study. Next, we personally met with the village headman, in which explained the importance and benefits of the research. Furthermore, we agreed to share the results of the research with the community and promised to keep the questionnaires confidential. After obtaining the approval from the village headman, we sought the cooperation of a local community member who could guide us to the respondents. We approached any community members who was above the age of 16 and had been living in the area for at least 1 year. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires and provided

a detailed instruction to the respondents. Most participants completed the questionnaire by themselves. However, a few respondents were illiterate, thus we opted to conduct interviews with them to obtain their insights and opinions. The respondents were again assured that their answers were for research purposes and would be kept confidential. The respondents were asked to respond to the questions based on their experiences in rural tourism development in their community. On the other hand, a total of 750 sets of questionnaires were distributed personally to the local community members in these rural tourism destinations. Of the 750 sets of questionnaires distributed, only 681 (90%) were returned. Out of the 681 sets of returned questionnaires, only 588 sets of questionnaires were usable for analysis as 93 sets had to be discarded due to missing and invalid data by the respondents. This was to ensure that the data were valid and reliable for this study.

3.3.2 Participatory Approach

Participatory approach is an efficient way to collect and gather important information from the local communities to achieve sustainable development in rural areas (Simpson, 2007; Valencia-Sandoval, Flanders, & Kozak, 2010). This approach encourages the involvement of the local communities in sustainable development strategies, which could highlight the new opportunities for development and to ensure that the priorities and opinions of the local communities are well known and are taken into account for developing a unique image of a destination to achieve sustainable rural tourism development in Sarawak. Hence, participatory approach enables the local communities to be the partners in the research process for this study and to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

There are few types of participatory approach methods, namely, semi-structured interviews, mapping techniques and diagrams (Creswell, & Miller, 2000; Zikmund, 2000; De Vaus, 2001) that can be used to enable the participants to express and share the information, opinions, and perceptions to achieve desire outcomes. For this study the researcher used participatory approach to conduct interviews with the headmen, homestay operators, and local community members. The participants were asked about their perspective on the positioning of rural tourism, motivation for the tourism activities and tourism business, involvement in rural tourism activities, readiness for this business and dealing with tourists, and the local infrastructure for tourists, and the problems and obstacles that they had encountered in this process. The input obtained from the interviews provided valuable information for the researchers to understand the perspectives and expectations of the local communities. According to McKenna (2010), semi structured interviews were most appropriate in rural areas, because some of the issues required sensitivity. The interviews established a thorough understanding of how rural communities are participating in tourism and the significance of tourism to their respective communities. Interviews were conducted in all of the seven rural tourism destinations, namely; Annah Rais Kampung, Batang Sadong, Kampung Bako, Lundu, Gunung Gading, Sematan, Batang Lupar Sri Aman, and Rumah Patrick Homestay in Miri.

Results of the interviews provided valuable knowledge about local community's perspective on tourism. Here are few of the points shared by the respondents. Majority of the respondents were firmly confident that tourism brings benefits to the community. A few community members shared their concerns on their environment sustainability, and better projection of their culture to attract the targeted tourists. It was also found that according to local

communities cultural and eco-tourism are the crux and essential component of the tourism development in their area. Further, the majority of the respondents believed that the community's management skills need to be further developed to host the visitors, and also to carefully control the numbers of visitors in order to avoid any negative impact. In spite of increasing demand for tourism they believe in controlled tourism. Hence as a result, the valuable information received from the semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to better understand the local concerns over tourism and positioning. It is very important to understand local perspective before planning and implementing any development plan for rural and indigenous people. Because any plan developed for rural areas and particularly for indigenous community cannot be successful unless it is completely in line with the local people views and concerns.

3.4 Research Questionnaire

The primary aim of the current research is to determine the perceived positioning of a rural destination by local communities. For this purpose, a questionnaire was developed to establish the significant relationship between the independent variables (i.e., the local community's perspective) and dependent variables (i.e., the perceived positioning by local comunity members). A self-administered survey was used to obtain the primary data. The items assessing the community's perspective and the perceived positioning was taken from previous studies; such as Kastenholz, Davis, Paul (1999), Kim, Crompton, Botha (2000), Reid, Mair and George (2004), Yoon and Uysal (2005), Park and Yoon (2009), Lee,

(2012), Mulec & Wise (2013), Rid, Ezeuduji and Pröbstl-Haider (2014). Table 3.2 provides a summary of the dimensions used and their sources.

The questionnaire consisted of 63 closed questions, which were presented in three parts. In first part, respondents were asked to complete demographic questions. The second part contained the questions regarding the independent variables and last part of the questionnaire presented questions about the dependent variables. The indicators of each construct were adopted from previous literature, from which the researcher selected items to ensure reliable results (Hair, Tatham, Anderson, & Black, 2006).

Table 3.2: The Measurement of Constructs

Part	Dimension	Total number of items	Sources	Rating Scale
B	**Community's perspective**			1=Strongly disagree and 7= strongly agree
	Motivation	6	(Park & Yoon, 2009)	
	Readiness	7	(Reid, Mair And George, 2004)	
	Involvement	5	(Lee 2012)	
	Attachment	5	(Lee, 2012)	
	Infrastructure	8	(Mulec & Wise, 2013)	
C	**Perceived Positioning**			1=Strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree
	Environmental Attributes	4	(Rid, Ezeuduji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014)	
	Social and Cultural Attributes	5	(Kastenholz, Davis, Paul, 1999)	
	Entertainment Attributes	4	(Kim, Crompton, Botha, 2000)	
	Authentic Rural Experience	5	(Rid, et al., 2014)	
	Learning Attributes	7	(Rid, et al., 2014;Yoon & Uysal, 2005)	

3.5 Measures

The questionnaire consisted of ten sets of scales, assessing motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, infrastructure, environmental attributes, social and cultural attributes, entertainment attributes, authentic rural experience, and learning attributes. Furthermore, demographic information relating to age, gender, marital status, race, academic qualification, monthly income, and occupation were also collected.

3.5.1 Community Motivation

To assess the motivation to develop tourism, six items were adapted from Park and Yoon (2009). Besides, these items were accessed by 7-point Likert Scale. Respondents were asked to rate their response using 7-point Likert Scale with: 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, for all six items. Thus, a higher score indicates that the local communities have a strong motivation to develop rural tourism in their community. The full set of items is provided in Appendix A.

3.5.2 Community Readiness

Readiness was measured by seven indicators and was adapted from (Reid, Mair and George, 2004). The items are presented in Appendix A. Respondents were asked to rate their response using 7-point Likert Scale with: 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, for all of the 7 items. A higher

score shows that the local communities know the basic skills to run a rural tourism business in their community.

3.5.3 Community Involvement

Involvement was measured by five items extracted a study by (Lee, 2012). The items are presented in Appendix A. Respondents were asked to indicate their involvement in rural tourism development in their community by using 7-point Likert Scale with the following anchors: 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, for all of the 5 items. A higher score means that the local community has active involvement in the tourism activities and development in their community.

3.5.4 Community Attachment

Five items were developed to measure community attachment towards their people and village. The items are presented in Appendix A. These items were collected from single study by (Lee, 2012). Respondents were asked to indicate their attachment towards their community by using the 7-point Likert Scale with the following anchors: 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, for all of the 5 items. A higher score means that the local communities have strong attachment towards their community.

3.5.5 Tourism Infrastructure

Items for infrastructure were made up of eight items adapted from (Mulec & Wise, 2013). The items are presented in Appendix A. Respondents were asked to assess the basic infrastructure in their community by using the 7-point Likert Scale with the following anchors: 7 = strongly agree, 6 = agree, 5 = slightly agree, 4 = neutral, 3 = slightly disagree, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, for all of the items. A higher score means that the local communities consider their village good in basic infrastructure.

3.5.6 Environmental Attributes

Environmental attributes, consists of four items, adapted from the work of (Rid, Ezeuduji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014). These items were used to measure the local communities' perceived positioning of their village as a rural tourism destination as shown in Appendix A. The respondents were asked to rate the most attractive attributes in their community on a 5- point Likert Scale in the questionnaire with the following anchors: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, for all of the 7 items. A higher score shows that the local communities have a high positive perception of environmental attributes in their community.

3.5.7 Social and Cultural Attributes

Social, and cultural attributes, consists of six items, adapted from (Kastenholz, Davis, Paul, 1999) as presented in Appendix A. Respondents were asked to rate social and cultural attraction in their community on a 5- point Likert Scale with the following anchors: 5 =

strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, for all of the 7 items. A higher score shows that the local communities have a high positive perception of social and cultural attributes in their community.

3.5.8 Entertainment Attributes

Entertainment attributes were evaluated by six items, adapted from (Kim, Crompton, Botha, 2000) as presented in Appendix A. Respondents were asked to rate the entertainment attractions in their community on a 5- point Likert Scale with the following anchors: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, for all of the 7 items. A higher score shows that the local communities have a high positive perception of entertainment attributes in their community.

3.5.9 Authentic Rural Experience

Authentic rural experience was calculated with five items from a single source (Rid, Ezeuduji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014) as presented in Appendix A. Respondents were asked to rate authentic rural experience in their community on a 5- point Likert Scale with the following anchors: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, for all of the 7 items. A higher score shows that the local communities have a high positive perception of authentic rural experience in their community.

3.5.10 Learning Attributes

Learning attributes was measured with four items adopted from a single source (Rid, Ezeuduji, & Pröbstl-Haider, 2014) as presented in Appendix A. Respondents were asked to learning determinants as a tourist attraction in their community on a 5- point Likert Scale with the following anchors: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, for all of the 7 items. A higher score shows that the local communities have a high positive perception of learning attributes as a tourist attraction in their community.

3.5.11 Demographic Variables

The demographic variables consisted of seven questions, assessing the participants that profiled the respondent demographics features such as age, gender, marital status, race, level of education, monthly income and occupation. It is important to take this data as it will provide basic understanding of the respondent's attitude towards tourism development, and will allows for easier data exploration and summarization.

3.6 Pre Test

A pre test is a small experiment designed to test the instruments and gather information to improve the validity and reliability of items (Hunt, Sparkman, & Wilcoz, 1982). A pre test can reveal errors and weaknesses in the developed questionnaire. It assessed the relevant indicators and checked the questions were complete and clear to the respondents.

Thus, a pre test was conducted with ten community members who were currently staying in Santubong village. The pre test was carried out over a period of 3 days, from the 19th to the 21st of October 2016. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire, which was provided in English and Bahasa Malay. They were selected from different walk of life including people involved in tourism activities in the community. All the returned questionnaires were usable in this study. Overall, the questionnaire was easy to understand. After the respondents had completed the questionnaire, researcher had a detailed in-depth interview session with each of the respondents.

The purpose was to identify potential difficulties regarding the format or wording of the questions. The in-depth interviews took the form of open-ended discussion between researcher and the interviewees, with main focus on understanding the local perspective on tourism. There were few comments from the community regarding some flawed questions from the questionnaire that are not clear or irrelevant to the respondent, which have been presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Outcomes of Pretesting Questionnaire

Item No.	Original Question	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	Comments/Change Made
5	I am motivated to promote my village as a destination for tourist's novelty and alone time	---	---	Don't know how to answer	---	---	Difficult to understand	---	What is novelty?	---	---	I am motivated to promote my village as a destination for tourist to enjoy alone time
7	My village is ready to face the challenges coming with tourism developments	---	---	Not sure on meaning	---	---	Don't know, difficult to answer	---	Don't know the answer	---	Difficult to answer	My village is ready to face the difficulties coming with tourism development
14	We do not have a clear process for solving problems as they arise	Repetition	---	Already asked	---	---	Repetition	---	Repetition	---		Deleted
15	Tourism development is out of control and too dominant an industry in our community.	---	---	Not fit in readiness context	---	---	---	---	---	---	Doesn't look relevant from the community readiness context	Deleted
16	The residents do not want to see any more tourism development take place in our community.	---	Repetition	Opposite to 10	---	---	Repetition	---	---	---	---	Deleted
17	The residents and business community are not in agreement on how tourism should develop in the future	Repetition	Same thing have been asked in 8	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	Repetition	Deleted

Table 3.3 continued

18	Everyone in the community needs to be involved in tourism development and not just left to the business community	---	---	---	---	---	Looks like previous questions	---	---	---	---	Deleted
19	If certain tourism proposals are developed by certain people in the community they are automatically opposed by others	---	---	Contradictory with previous questions	---	---	Repetition	---	---	---	---	Deleted
28	I feel a strong sense of belonging to this community	Repetition	Repetition in questions 28 and 32	---	---	---	Repetition	---	Confusing questions	---	Repetition	Item 26 and 28 Deleted
29	I feel that this community is a part of me	Difficult to understand	Looks like question no. 30 and 31	Not clear and looks same like other questions	---	---	Repetition	---		---	Looks same like 28	Deleted
30	Living in this community means a lot to me	---	Repetition	---	---	---	Looks repetition	---	Look same like previous	---	Not clear	Deleted
31	Living in this community says a lot about who I am	Not clear	Repetition	---	---	---	Repetition	---	---	---	Not sure on meaning and looks same like previous questions	Item 31, 33 Deleted

Table 3.3 continued

38	My village has aesthetic (changed to attractive) location of accommodation	---	---	Difficult to understand	---	---	What is aesthetic	---	---	Confusing	Difficult to understand	My village has attractive location of accommodation
39	My village has efficient and quality airport system	No airport in our village	No airport in our village	No airport in our village	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	No airport	Deleted
40	My village has tourist guidance and information	---	Not clear	---	---	---	Confusing sentence	---	---	---	---	My village has guidance and information support for tourists
45	Importance of rural tourism	---	---	Confusing sentence	Not clear			---	---	Confusing sentence		Healthy lifestyle and rural experience
46	Importance of tourism in natural areas	---	Confusing sentence	Confusing sentence			Doesn't fit in the current context	---	---		Doesn't fit in the current context	Natural Environment
47	Importance of history & culture	Repetition	---	---	---	Repetition	---	---	Repetition		---	Deleted
48	Experience wildlife forests and national parks	Not clear	---	---	---	---		---	---	---	---	Wildlife forests and national parks

Table 3.3 continued

49	Historical attractions experience	---	---	Repetition	---	---	Repetition	---	---	Repetition	---	Deleted
52	Traditional way of life	---	---	---	---	---	Repetition	---		---	Looks same like 56 and 73	Item 52, 53 and 56 deleted
57	Entertainment/night life	Not related to rural tourism	---	---	---	---	Not related	---	Don't know	---	---	Deleted
58	Opportunities for socializing	---	---	---	Not clear	---	---	---	---	---	Not clear	Social events
59	Opportunities for families with children	---	---	Not clear	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	Opportunities of socializing for families with children
60	Opportunities for sports	---	Not clear	---	---	---	---	Not clear	---	---	---	Traditional games and sports
65	Good recreational opportunities	Repetition	Repetition	---	---	Repetition	---	Repetition	---	---	---	Item 65 and 66 deleted
61	A wide variety type of food	---	---	Repetition	---	---	Looks like 72 and 79	---	Same question asked again and again	---	Repetition	Item 61 and 79 deleted

Table 3.3 continued

82	Being free to act how I feel	Not agree	---	Tourist has to respect local culture and traditions	---	---	---	---	Not agree	---	Don't know	Deleted

Notes: R=Respondent

3.7 Statistical Analysis

The computer statistics packages SmartPLS 2.0 (M3) and SPSS were employed. Firstly, researcher conducted a descriptive analysis of the demographic questions, then reliability tests, factor analyses, structural equation modelling (SEM), and PLS, were conducted to analyse the data.

3.7.1 Descriptive Statistics

In the descriptive analyses, the mean, mode, standard deviation, frequency, maximum, minimum, range, and percentage were calculated. In this study, the purpose of descriptive analysis is to determine the profiles of the respondents, such as, gender, age, ethnicity, education level and income level. It provides a simple summary of the respondent's demographic profile. The values are presented in tabular and graphical form to provide a meaningful picture.

3.7.2 Common Method Variance

Common method variance (CMV) is variance attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures represent (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In other words, CMV creates false internal consistency that may lead to common method bias. The measurement errors may either inflate or deflate the observed relationships between constructs, creating both Type I and Type II errors. Winkelbach and Walter (2015) suggest that a factor that explains more than 50% of the variance is categorized as common method bias. Harman's single factor is one of the statistical remedies often used to check

whether variance in the data is largely attributed to a single factor (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010). Winkelbach and Walter (2015) suggested, a factor that explains more than 50 per cent of the variance is categorized as common method bias. Therefore, Harman's single factor analysis was used in this study to detect and control possible CMV.

3.7.3 Reliability Analysis

Reliability is used to measure and indicate the extent to which the measures are error free; hence, it offers a consistent measurement across time and various items in the measurement (Cavana, Corbett, & Lo, 2007). Reliability is also used to indicate the stability and consistency of the instrument; it also assesses the goodness of the measurements in a study (Haque & Khatibi, 2005). The "alpha" value confirms whether the questionnaire data is reliable or not (Ho & Oh, 2009). The alpha coefficient value ranges from 0 to 1. An acceptable level of internal reliability is a Cronbach alpha of 0.7 or higher (Nunally & Bernstein, 1994; Sekaran, 1992). With a Cronbach value of 0.8 and higher, items are considered highly correlated and reliable (Cavana, Corbett, & Lo, 2007). We thus calculated Cronbach's alpha for all constructs before proceeding to the next analysis.

3.7.4 Multicollinearity Statistics

Multicollinearity analysis is used to identify high correlations between the predictor variables. Collinearity occurs when two or more indicators are entered in the same block of indicators with the same information. There are two necessary measures to assess the level of collinearity, namely tolerance value and variance inflation factor (VIF). In the context of PLS,

Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2016) recommended a tolerance value of 0.20 or lower, and a VIF value of 5.00 and higher. This would illustrate high levels of collinearity or multicollinearity between the independent variables.

3.7.5 Structural Equation Modelling

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is an effective tool in non-experimental research (Byrne, 2001). SEM identifies the strength of a relationship among the variables in the theoretical model (Maruyama, 1997). Hair et al., (2006) stated that SEM examines the direct and indirect relationship between the endogenous constructs and exogenous constructs. SEM is a multi-level model, provides goodness-of-fit indices, and addresses an interrelated set of research questions (Gefen, Straub, & Botidreaii, 2000). Gerbing and Anderson (1988) state that SEM enables researchers to answer a set of interrelated research questions in a single, systematic, and comprehensive analysis by examining the direct and indirect relationships among multiple independent and dependent constructs simultaneously. Furthermore, Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010) noted that SEM is a combination of both interdependent and dependenct techniques, largely because the foundation lies with factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, which are multivariate techniques. SEM contains two sub models, namely inner and outer models. The inner model identifies the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables, whereas the outer model specifies the relationships between the latent variables and their observed indicators (Wong, 2016). Moreover, there are two types of variables in SEM, namely exogenous and endogenous. Exogenous variables are latent and multi-item equivalent of independent variables (Hair et al., 2010). Furthermore, Wong (2016) outlined that there are several distinct approaches to SEM, namely covariance-based SEM

(CB-SEM) and PLS. CB-SEM uses software packages, such as AMOS, EQS, LISREL, and MPlus, whereas PLS uses PLS-Graph, VisualPLS, SmartPLS, and WarpPLS. In this study, we employed PLS as the soft modelling approach to SEM, and used SmartPLS software to analyse the data.

3.7.6 Partial Least Squares

Partial Least Squares (PLS) is a modelling technique developed by Herman Wold (1982, 1985). Latent variable modelling techniques PLS incorporates multiple dependent constructs and recognizes measurement errors (Karim, 2009). It utilizes two modelling techniques: Firstly, it employs models to identify manifest variables (MVs) and the latent variables (LVs). Secondly, it models the endogenous LVs to other LVs (Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, & Lauro, 2005). In this case, latent variables are also known as unobservable variables; however, manifest variables are called observable variables or indicators. PLS is an exploratory analysis and confirmatory analysis method (Barroso, Carrion, & Roldan, 2010). It focuses on exploratory analysis by maximizing the variance explained in the constructs rather than model fitness (Barclay, Thompson, & Higgins, 1995). It is able to judge the formative and reflective constructs in a study's model (Hlem, Eggert, & Garnefled, 2010).

PLS is the soft modelling approach to SEM that has the ability to estimate complex models with many constructs, inner model relationships, and indicator variables (Hair et al., 2012). In other words, PLS is a method of choice when working with a wide range of constructs and highly complex models. PLS has the ability to work efficiently with a much wider range of sample sizes (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011). PLS relies on the measures indicating the

model's predictive capabilities to judge the model's quality (Hair et al., 2011). This is because PLS focuses on the discrepancy between the observed (manifest variables) or approximated values (latent variables) of the dependent variables and the values predicted by the model in the question.

Moreover, PLS has an important characteristic that readily incorporates both reflective and formative measures (Hair et al., 2011). PLS has the ability to process nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio scaled variables (Fornell & Bookstein, 1982; Haelein & Kaplan, 2004; Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009). Furthermore, PLS is useful when the research objective is to predict and explain the variance of key target constructs by different explanatory constructs and when the available data is non-normal (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009; Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Mena, 2012). In other words, PLS is suitable for prediction and theory development research objectives. In addition, PLS is an alternative method to CB-SEM; it has many benefits not offered by CB-SEM (Hair et al., 2011). For instance, when CB-SEM assumptions, such as multivariate normality of data and minimum sample size are not fulfilled, then PLS is the preferred method (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000). Furthermore, Halawi and McCarthy (2008) described PLS as an efficient tool for researchers to understand and use in comparison to Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. In addition, Chin (2010) stated that due to easy to understand graphical representations, the results generated with PLS are easier to evaluate. As a result, PLS was viewed as suitable choice for this study.

Luo, Li, Zhang and Shim (2010) discuss the use of PLS in examining the model fit and in investigation of the processes such as factor loadings, composite reliability, and convergent

validity. Karim (2009) describes the use of composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha as multiple methods for evaluation of reliability of the data items. Moreover, convergent validity (CV) is assessed by evaluating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct (Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000). Chin (2010) described AVE as a measure of the variance that a latent variable (LV) component captures from its indicators. Both the composite reliability (CR) and factor loadings should be greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2006). However, factor loadings of 0.5 and above are significant for interpretation of the structure (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995; Hair et al, 2010). Moreover, loading values of CV should be greater than 0.7 (Chin, 1998a), whereas the recommended loading value of AVE must be greater than 0.5 (Fornell & Larcke, 1981). As such, a AVE which is greater than 0.5 indicates that a LV is able to explain better variance of indicators on average (Karim, 2009).

PLS also provides a coefficient of determination (R^2 value) and path coefficients (Halawi & McCarthy, 2008). The R^2 value is the indicator of the strength of the relationship between the observed and the simulated values (Santhi et al., 2001). As noted by Chin (1998a), a R^2 value of 0.67, 0.33, and 0.19 can be referred to as "substantial", "moderate", and "weak", respectively. Chin (2010) also identified that a high or low R^2 value refers to the degree of the impact of independent variables towards the dependent variable. In addition, he stated that a model with low R^2 and factor loadings could still have an excellent Goodness-of-fit (GoF). PLS also exhibits predictive relevance (Q^2) value to predict the data points of indicators in the reflective measurement models of the independent constructs and dependent single-item constructs. Hair et al., (2014) recommended that a Q^2 value that is larger than zero for a reflective independent variable, demonstrate the path model's predictive relevance for this construct.

Furthermore, PLS provide an effect size (f^2) to identify whether the omitted exogenous construct leaves an impact on the endogenous constructs when there are changes in the R^2 value (Hair et al., 2014). Cohen (1988) suggested that values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicated small, medium, and large effects of the exogenous variables on endogenous variables, respectively. The path coefficients of the PLS structural model can be defined as the standardized beta coefficients of ordinary least squares regressions and each of the path coefficient's significance can be assessed by a bootstrapping procedure (Hair et al., 2011). Path coefficients that are significant in the hypothesized direction show empirical support to the proposed causal relationship.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has discussed the research process applied in the current research, such as data sampling, development of survey instruments, and related measurement methods. The procedure and techniques of data analysis has also been highlighted, as well as the process of hypothesis verification. The assumptions and the rationale of using different analyses techniques were also discussed. In the next chapter, the results are described.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of data collection for this study. It also outlines the information regarding the statistical analysis tools applied in this study, that are Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0 and SmartPLS (M3) 2.0. The results and theoretical model are examined in the later part. Additionally, the summary results of the findings are also presented in the study.

4.2 Profile of Respondents

A total of 750 questionnaires were distributed to seven rural tourism destinations in Sarawak, Malaysia; namely, Annah Rais Kampung, Batang Sadong, Bako National Park, Gunung Gading, Sematan, Batang Lupar Sri Aman, and Rumah Patrick Homestay in Miri. Out of the 750 distributed questionnaires, 681 were returned, (indicating a 90% of response rate). Out of these 681, ninety-three questionnaires were discarded because of missing and invalid data. The remaining final sample size for the hypothesis testing was thus 588 questionnaires, indicating 77% for hypothesis testing. A complete demographic profile of the respondents' characteristics is presented in Table 4.1. The questionnaire contained a range of questions to determine the respondents' characteristics. Firstly, the researcher utilized descriptive statistics to obtain the general information of the respondents.

The respondents were aged between 16 to 60 years old. The number of participants within each age category can be taken from Table 4.1. Respondents who fall between groups of 16 to 20 were 30 or 5.1%, group 21 to 30 were 150 or 25.5%, group 31 to 40 were 126 or 21.4%, group 41 to 50 were 150 or 25.5%, group 51 to 60 were 100 or 17%, and 61 and above were 32 or 5.4%.

Female respondents were recorded 318 (54.1%) and males at 270 (45.9%), 281 respondents were still single and 307 were married. In terms of ethnicity, the majority were Bidayuh respondents were (208 or 35.4%), followed by Malay (155 or 26.2%), Iban (114 or 19.4%), and Chinese (97 or 16.5%), and others (15 or 2.6%). The respondents classified, as others were Orang Ulu and Kayan.

Academically, the majority of the respondents (334 or 56.8%) were secondary school passed, followed by diploma holders (105 or 17.9%), primary school passed (68 or 11.6%), university graduates (53 or 9%), others (28 or 4.8%). The respondents classified, as "others" were uneducated.

The respondents' occupation varied between government employees (29 or 4.9%), private sector employees (187 or 31.8%), businessman/woman (59 or 10%), retired (13 or 2.2%), farmers (25 or 4.3%), in tourism business (109 or 18.5%), students (22 or 3.7%), and others (144 or 24.5%). The respondents in the "other" category include artists, housewives, and unemployed. In terms of monthly income, a majority of 338 or 57.5% of the respondents earned less RM1,500, while 108 or 18.4% were earning between RM1,501 to RM3,000, 61 or 10.4% respondents were earning within the range of RM3,001 to RM4,500, followed by 53 or

9% who earned less than RM500, and 22 or 3.6% respondents were not earning and a minority of the respondents (6 or 1%) were earning more than RM 4501.

Table 4.1: Demographic Profiles of Respondents

Respondent (N=588)			
Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	16-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 60 and above	30 150 126 150 100 32	5.1 25.5 21.4 25.5 17.0 5.4
Gender	Male Female	270 318	45.9 54.1
Marital Status	Married Unmarried	307 281	52.0 47.8
Race	Bidayuh Iban Chinese Malay Others	208 114 97 154 15	35.4 19.4 16.5 26.2 2.6
Education	Primary school Secondary school Diploma University Others	68 334 105 53 28	11.6 56.8 17.9 9.0 4.8
Occupation	Govt Employed Private-sector Employed Businessman/woman Retired Farmer Tourism business Student Others	29 187 59 13 25 109 22 144	4.9 31.8 10.0 2.2 4.3 18.5 3.7 24.5
Monthly Income	No income Less than 500 Between RM501 to RM1,500 Between RM1,501 to RM 3,000 Between RM3,001 to RM 4,500 Above RM4,501	22 53 338 108 61 6	3.7 9.0 57.5 18.4 10.4 1.0

4.3 A Statistical Overview of the Variables

To check the central tendency and dispersion of data, researcher used mean and standard deviation in the study. The results provide a clear picture of the responses by respondents to the items in the questionnaire and also showed how well the items were being measured. Descriptive statistics of this test are presented in Table 4.2. There were 588 valid responses from the questionnaires. The independent variables namely; motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, and infrastructure, listed in Table 4.2, were rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The empirical findings show that the highest mean was in motivation (Motiv04), with 5.859, indicating the averagely the respondents rated 5.859 for motivation 04. Also the standard deviation of 0.731 for motivation 04 indicates that few respondents were having different opinion about this specific aspect of tourism.

While dependent variables, namely, environmental attributes, social & cultural attributes, entertainment attributes, authentic rural experience, and learning attributes were rated using a 5-point Likert scale. The mean of authentic rural experience 05 (ARE_Att05) scored highest, 4.546, indicating the averagely the respondents rated 4.546 for this construct. Moreover, the standard deviation for authentic rural experience04 (ARE_Att04) was 1.138, indicates that few respondents had divergent views on this specific aspect.

Table 4.2: Mean and Standard Deviation

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
Motiv01	5.815	0.872	Infra06	4.497	0.890
Motiv02	5.359	1.107	Infra07	4.702	1.122
Motiv03	5.684	0.944	Infra08	5.051	1.023
Motiv04	5.859	0.731	EA01	4.243	0.661
Motiv05	5.690	0.858	EA02	4.126	0.720
Motiv06	5.796	0.891	EA03	4.335	0.608
Readi01	5.190	0.838	EA04	4.281	0.570
Readi02	3.859	0.931	SCA01	3.568	0.878
Readi03	4.776	1.092	SCA02	3.668	0.826
Readi04	4.855	1.038	SCA03	3.648	0.824
Readi05	4.753	1.327	SCA04	3.898	0.989
Readi06	4.668	1.219	SCA05	3.736	0.846
Readi07	4.862	1.148	Enter_Att01	4.014	0.578
Involv01	3.741	1.337	Enter_Att02	3.670	0.883
Involv02	3.704	1.302	Enter_Att03	3.937	0.805
Involv03	5.163	1.126	Enter_Att04	3.815	0.543
Involv04	3.648	1.414	ARE_Att01	3.995	0.711
Involv05	3.073	1.505	ARE_Att02	4.189	0.705
Attach01	4.983	0.887	ARE_Att03	4.036	0.794
Attach02	5.310	0.997	ARE_Att04	4.216	0.705
Attach03	5.194	0.877	ARE_Att05	4.546	1.138
Attach04	5.129	0.938	LA01	4.075	0.659
Attach05	5.036	0.852	LA02	4.032	0.610
Infra01	4.825	1.215	LA03	4.024	0.695
Infra02	4.935	1.160	LA04	4.071	0.824
Infra03	5.019	1.149	LA05	4.184	0.696

Table 4.2 continued

Infra04	**4.498**	**0.773**	**LA06**	**4.156**	**0.673**
Infra05	4.313	1.045	LA07	4.216	0.556

Notes: Motiv=Motivation, Readi=Readiness, Involv=Involvement, Attach=Attachment, Infra=Infrastructure, EA=Environmental Attributes, SCA=Social & Cultural Attributes, Enter_Att=Entertainment Attributes, ARE_Att= Authentic Rural Experience Attribute, LA=Learning Attributes. Scale for independent variables used 1=Strongly Disagree, 7=Strongly Agree, Scale for dependent variables used 1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree

4.4 Common Method Variance

Common method variance (CMV) refers to the variance in measures that can be attributed to the measurement method rather than the construct that the instrument is supposed to measure. CMV is a problem in behavioral research because it may systematically distort the relationships between constructs (Temme, Paulssen, & Hildebrandt, 2009). In quantitative research, CMV may occur when self-administered questionnaires are used to collect data at the same time from the same respondents. For this study, Harman's single factor test was applied to avoid common method bias or CMV.

4.4.1 Harman's Single Factor Test

This test detects and controls any possible CMV. In this study, CMV was applied just after the data collection process to check whether the variance in the data can be loaded onto a single factor. Winkelbach and Walter (2015) explain that common method bias occurs when the first component explains more than 50% of the variance. The results of Harman's single factor test are shown in Table 4.3, which demonstrates that the first component accounted for 19.420% of the variance, which is below the threshold of 50%. Therefore, the results can be considered unbiased by common method.

Table 4.3: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	10.875	19.420	19.420	10.875	19.420	19.420
2	5.838	10.425	29.845			
3	5.287	9.441	39.286			
4	3.887	6.942	46.228			
5	3.011	5.377	51.605			
6	2.187	3.906	55.511			
7	1.839	3.285	58.795			
8	1.773	3.166	61.961			
9	1.526	2.725	64.686			
10	1.400	2.499	67.185			
11	1.351	2.413	69.599			
12	1.213	2.166	71.765			
13	1.117	1.995	73.760			
14	1.097	1.959	75.719			
15	.967	1.728	77.446			
16	.916	1.637	79.083			
17	.831	1.485	80.568			
18	.806	1.439	82.006			
19	.775	1.383	83.389			
20	.726	1.297	84.686			
21	.648	1.157	85.843			
22	.631	1.126	86.969			
23	.572	1.021	87.991			
24	.508	.906	88.897			
25	.496	.887	89.784			
26	.462	.825	90.608			
27	.422	.754	91.362			
28	.399	.712	92.074			
29	.379	.677	92.751			
30	.360	.642	93.394			
31	.298	.533	93.926			
32	.280	.500	94.426			
33	.267	.476	94.902			
34	.257	.459	95.361			
35	.247	.442	95.803			
36	.229	.409	96.211			
37	.203	.363	96.574			
38	.187	.335	96.909			
39	.185	.330	97.239			
40	.176	.313	97.552			
41	.165	.295	97.848			
42	.152	.272	98.120			
43	.141	.251	98.371			
44	.136	.243	98.614			
45	.127	.226	98.840			
46	.105	.188	99.028			
47	.096	.172	99.199			
48	.081	.145	99.344			
49	.076	.135	99.480			
50	.065	.116	99.595			
51	.061	.110	99.705			
52	.047	.083	99.789			
53	.046	.082	99.870			
54	.032	.057	99.928			
55	.028	.051	99.978			
56	.012	.022	100.000			

Notes: Extraction Method: Principal component analysis

4.5 Goodness of Measures

The research model for the present study is shown in Figure 4.1. The model consists of five independent variables (motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment and infrastructure), and five dependent variables (environmental attributes, social and cultural attributes, entertainment attributes, authentic rural experience, and learning attributes). Validity and reliability were calculated to assess the goodness of measures. Assessment to the measurement model was conducted to ensure the correct and accurate measurement of variables (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). Reliability analysis measured the internal consistency reliability, while convergent validity and discriminant validity assessed the construct validity.

4.5.1 Assessment of the Measurement Model

Prior to hypothesis testing, the research model was assessed, through reliability and construct validity. Thus, indicator validity, loadings, and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to evaluate convergent validity. Then, Formell-Larcker criterion and cross loadings were employed to assess discriminant validity. To indicate the level of reliability, the internal consistency reliability of the model was tested.

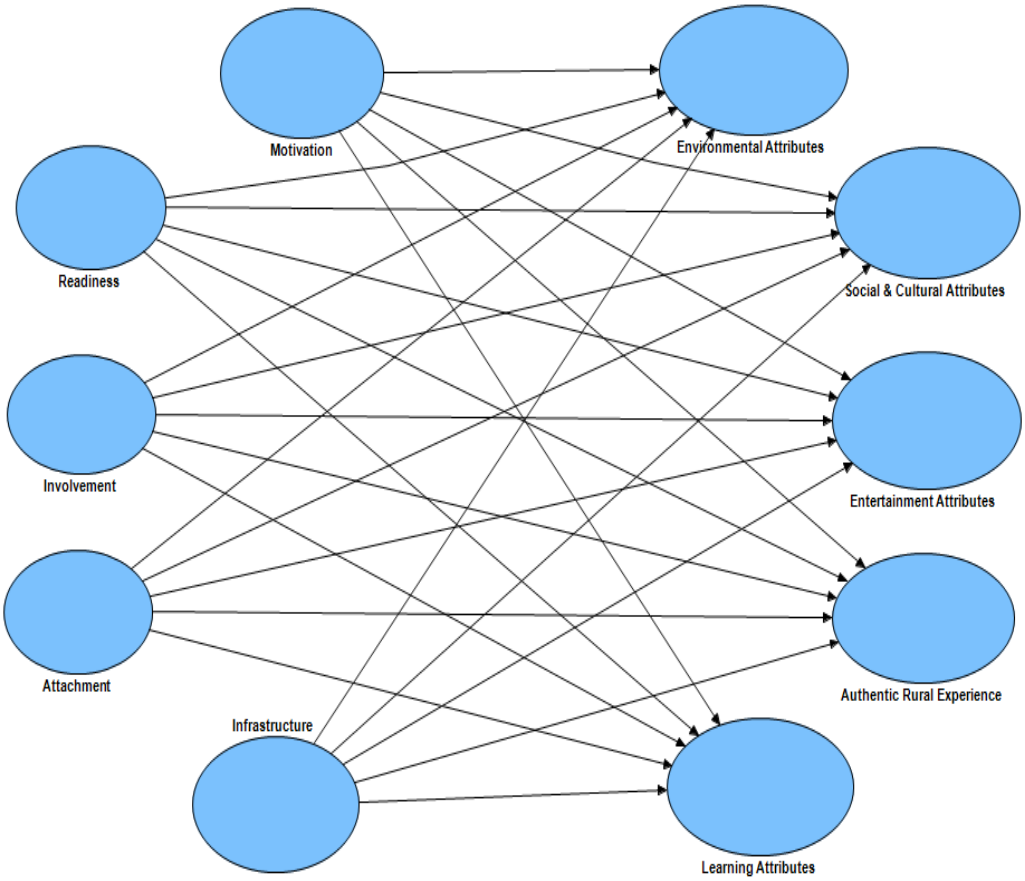


Figure 4.1: Conceptual Model

4.5.1.1 Loadings and Cross Loadings

In order to test the model's internal consistency, the items loading and cross loading values were demonstrated (Chin, Marcolin, & Newsted, 1998; Chin, 2010; Lee & Chen, 2010). Table 4.4 exhibits these loadings. The loading value for authentic rural experience ranged from 0.755 to 0.940, attachment ranged from 0.772 to 0.953, environmental attribute ranged from 0.565 to 0.796, entertainment attribute ranged from 0.635 to 0.901, infrastructure ranged from 0.591 to 0.934, involvement ranged from 0.677 to 0.968, learning attributes ranged from

0.554 to 0.854, motivation ranged from 0.593 to 0.892, readiness ranged from 0.765 to 0.963, and social and cultural attractions ranged from 0.562 to 0.889. The significance value of 0.5 was used as a cut-off value as recommended by Hair et al., (2010). All loading items that were less than 0.5 were discarded (i.e., SCA04, EA02, SCA03, LA01, Enter_Att02, Readi02, Readi03, Infra05, and LA03). Table 4.4 also presents the results of the cross loadings and it also shows that cross loadings for all of the items measuring a construct loaded higher then all of its cross loadings with other constructs. Therefore, it supports the good construct validity for the model.

Table 4.4: Loadings and Cross Loadings

	ARE	Attach	EA	Enter Att	Infra	Invol	LA	Motiv	Readi	SCA
ARE_Att01	0.847	0.504	0.253	0.482	0.615	0.173	0.361	0.315	-0.368	0.162
ARE_Att02	0.940	0.397	0.201	0.407	0.528	0.052	0.273	0.089	-0.434	0.244
ARE_Att03	0.755	0.288	0.178	0.313	0.356	0.057	0.199	0.076	-0.306	0.188
ARE_Att04	0.828	0.353	0.145	0.273	0.406	0.080	0.182	0.068	-0.317	0.172
Attach01	0.370	0.816	0.398	0.268	0.253	0.323	0.122	0.461	-0.131	0.191
Attach02	0.305	0.772	0.415	0.343	0.239	0.311	0.112	0.496	-0.219	0.309
Attach03	0.473	0.953	0.487	0.384	0.366	0.432	0.193	0.618	-0.150	0.275
Attach04	0.471	0.836	0.367	0.240	0.481	0.442	0.179	0.595	-0.032	0.224
Attach05	0.342	0.835	0.371	0.308	0.245	0.368	0.111	0.509	-0.078	0.205
EA01	0.301	0.458	0.796	0.398	0.400	0.319	-0.024	0.209	-0.267	0.313
EA02	0.004	0.252	0.684	0.131	0.033	0.087	0.162	0.142	-0.069	0.184
EA03	-0.008	0.314	0.773	0.159	0.041	0.115	0.232	0.264	0.006	0.154
EA04	0.196	0.257	0.565	0.180	0.182	0.295	0.086	0.230	-0.129	0.231
Enter_Att01	0.421	0.408	0.313	0.901	0.347	-0.026	0.331	0.366	-0.396	0.388
Enter_Att03	0.347	0.186	0.136	0.835	0.181	-0.182	0.197	0.332	-0.147	0.342
Enter_Att04	0.294	0.260	0.488	0.634	0.249	0.127	0.143	0.146	-0.255	0.211
Infra01	0.562	0.449	0.278	0.284	0.862	0.372	0.181	0.202	-0.110	0.186
Infra02	0.553	0.434	0.250	0.318	0.934	0.280	0.257	0.140	-0.174	0.185
Infra03	0.391	0.377	0.369	0.221	0.855	0.461	0.243	0.115	-0.116	0.198
Infra04	0.291	0.153	0.127	0.120	0.591	0.182	0.087	0.035	-0.015	0.101
Infra06	0.270	0.055	0.144	0.259	0.711	0.019	0.277	0.007	-0.055	0.160
Infra07	0.545	0.199	0.296	0.371	0.834	0.264	0.298	0.123	-0.118	0.234
Infra08	0.548	0.366	0.193	0.219	0.800	0.283	0.214	0.204	-0.143	0.166
Involv01	0.061	0.387	0.303	-0.053	0.229	0.919	-0.198	0.208	-0.018	0.058
Involv02	0.078	0.395	0.309	0.002	0.241	0.915	-0.194	0.211	-0.050	0.054
Involv03	0.080	0.385	0.226	-0.160	0.474	0.677	-0.020	0.358	0.191	0.017
Involv04	0.081	0.430	0.348	-0.020	0.270	0.968	-0.197	0.236	-0.034	0.060
Involv05	0.212	0.381	0.254	-0.051	0.388	0.889	-0.101	0.149	-0.002	-0.027
LA01	0.159	-0.038	-0.028	0.133	0.061	-0.249	0.554	-0.025	-0.037	-0.014
LA02	0.202	0.141	0.076	0.217	0.223	-0.081	0.811	0.229	0.039	0.117
LA03	0.105	0.116	0.082	0.184	0.156	-0.071	0.719	0.220	0.098	0.093
LA06	0.358	0.263	0.213	0.312	0.361	-0.058	0.854	0.320	0.070	0.156
LA07	0.239	0.024	-0.031	0.187	0.108	-0.273	0.648	0.013	-0.022	0.030
Motiv01	-0.016	0.487	0.172	0.200	0.069	0.235	0.154	0.821	0.338	0.119
Motiv02	-0.129	0.144	-0.088	0.225	-0.085	-0.081	0.125	0.593	0.332	-0.087
Motiv03	-0.099	0.342	0.171	0.247	-0.174	0.003	0.153	0.781	0.352	0.060
Motiv04	0.214	0.482	0.232	0.330	0.096	0.186	0.310	0.796	0.286	0.116
Motiv05	0.201	0.637	0.374	0.365	0.267	0.293	0.217	0.892	0.175	0.198
Motiv06	0.281	0.631	0.254	0.332	0.243	0.279	0.145	0.847	0.061	0.212
Readi01	-0.395	-0.058	-0.158	-0.210	-0.167	-0.136	0.063	0.323	0.765	-0.144
Readi05	-0.397	-0.172	-0.218	-0.378	-0.128	0.064	0.036	0.234	0.963	-0.243
Readi06	-0.374	-0.148	-0.167	-0.332	-0.110	0.043	0.047	0.231	0.912	-0.175
Readi07	-0.351	-0.126	-0.188	-0.283	-0.095	0.020	0.039	0.178	0.894	-0.217
SCA01	0.210	0.305	0.281	0.359	0.287	0.089	0.024	0.183	-0.161	0.881
SCA02	0.127	0.083	0.249	0.223	-0.022	-0.052	0.184	0.056	-0.194	0.562
SCA03	0.193	0.286	0.249	0.319	0.265	0.079	0.028	0.165	-0.156	0.889
SCA05	0.138	0.107	0.280	0.332	-0.001	-0.076	0.263	0.083	-0.212	0.636

Notes: LA=Learning Attributes, Attach=Attachment, ARE_Att= Authentic Rural Experience Attribute, Enter_Att=Entertainment Attributes, EA=Environmental Attributes, Infra=Infrastructure, Involv=Involvement, Motiv=Motivation, Readi=Readiness, and SCA =Social & Cultural Attributes,

4.5.1.2 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity identifies the degree to which multiple items that measure the same concept are in agreement (Ramayah, Lee, & In, 2011). Convergent validity is established when the score obtained with two different instruments measuring the same variable are highly correlated (Bajpai & Bajpai, 2014). In the current research, convergent validity was assessed by factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE). Table 4.5 presents the factor loadings, CR and AVE. The loadings for each of the items exceeded the acceptance level of 0.5, as suggested by Hair et al., (2010). The CR value for learning attributes was 0.844, authentic rural experience was 0.909, entertainment attributes was 0.838, environmental attributes was 0.800, social and cultural attributes was 0.837, attachment was 0.925, infrastructure was 0.927, involvement was 0.944, motivation was 0.910, and readiness was 0.936. The CR values exceeded the strived for 0.70, ranging from 0.800 to 0.944. Therefore, the items measuring the same variables have adequate convergence consistency.

Table 4.5: Results of Measurement Model

Model Construct	**Measurement Item**	**Loadings**	**CR[a]**	**AVE[b]**
Learning Attributes	Learning Attributes 1 Learning Attributes 2 Learning Attributes 3 Learning Attributes 6 Learning Attributes 7	0.554 0.811 0.719 0.854 0.648	0.844	0.526
Authentic Rural Experience	Authentic Rural Experience 1 Authentic Rural Experience 2 Authentic Rural Experience 3 Authentic Rural Experience 4	0.847 0.940 0.755 0.828	0.909	0.714
Entertainment Attributes	Entertainment Attributes 1 Entertainment Attributes 3 Entertainment Attributes 4	0.901 0.835 0.634	0.838	0.637
Environmental Attributes	Environmental Attributes 1 Environmental Attributes 2 Environmental Attributes 3 Environmental Attributes 4	0.796 0.684 0.773 0.565	0.800	0.505
Social & Cultural Attributes	Social & Cultural Attributes 1 Social & Cultural Attributes 2 Social & Cultural Attributes 3 Social & Cultural Attributes 5	0.881 0.562 0.889 0.636	0.837	0.572
Attachment	Attachment 1 Attachment 2 Attachment 3 Attachment 4 Attachment 5	0.816 0.772 0.953 0.836 0.835	0.925	0.713
Infrastructure	Infrastructure 1 Infrastructure 2 Infrastructure 3 Infrastructure 4 Infrastructure 6 Infrastructure 7 Infrastructure 8	0.862 0.934 0.855 0.591 0.711 0.834 0.800	0.927	0.648
Involvement	Involvement 1 Involvement 2 Involvement 3 Involvement 4 Involvement 5	0.919 0.915 0.677 0.968 0.889	0.944	0.774
Motivation	Motivation 1 Motivation 2 Motivation 3 Motivation 4 Motivation 5 Motivation 6	0.821 0.593 0.781 0.796 0.892 0.847	0.910	0.630

Table 4.5 continued

Readiness	**Readiness 1** **Readiness 5** **Readiness 6** **Readiness 7**	**0.765** **0.963** **0.912** **0.894**	**0.936**	**0.786**

Notes: [a] Composite Reliability (CR) = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/ {(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (square of the summation of the error variances)}

[b] Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = (summation of the square of the factor loadings)/{(summation of the square of the factor loadings) + (summation of the error variances)}

AVE shows the volume of variance that a latent variable component takes from its indicators (Chin, 2010). The AVE value for learning attributes was 0.526, authentic rural experience was 0.714, entertainment attributes was 0.637, environmental attributes was 0.505, social and cultural attributes was 0.572, attachment was 0.713, infrastructure was 0.648, involvement was 0.774, motivation was 0.630, and readiness was 0.786. All of the AVE values were ranged from 0.505 to 0.786. Therefore, all of the latent variables in this study were able to explain the variance of indicator on average and the constructs. Hence all the ten constructs, namely learning attributes, attachment, authentic rural experience, entertainment attributes, environmental attributes, infrastructure, involvement, motivation, readiness, and social & cultural attributes are all valid measures of their respective constructs based on their parameters estimates and statistical significance, which proves to achieve convergent validity

4.5.1.3 Reliability Test

Cronbach's coefficient alpha was applied to assess the item consistency of the measurement items. Results from this test are shown in Table 4.6. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha values

ranged between 0.693 and 0.924, reaching the cut-off value of 0.7 (Sekaran, 1992). In this study Cronbach's coefficient alpha value for learning attributes was 0.774, authentic rural experience was 0.866, entertainment attributes was 0.719, environmental attributes was 0.693, social and cultural attributes was 0.759, attachment was 0.898, infrastructure was 0.907, involvement was 0.924, motivation was 0.889, and readiness was 0.907. As shown in Table 4.5 CR values ranged from 0.800 to 0.944, as the values are higher than 0.70 they are considered acceptable (Gefen et al., 2000; Hair et al., 2006). Thus, the items for each of the factors are correlated and reliable.

Table 4.6: Results of Reliability Test

Model Construct	Measurement Item	Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha	Loadings Range	Number of Items
Learning Attributes	Learning Attributes 1 Learning Attributes 2 Learning Attributes 3 Learning Attributes 6 Learning Attributes 7	0.774	0.554 to 0.854	7(5)
Authentic Rural Experience	Authentic Rural Experience 1 Authentic Rural Experience 2 Authentic Rural Experience 3 Authentic Rural Experience 4	0.866	0.755 to 0.940	5(4)
Entertainment Attributes	Entertainment Attributes 1 Entertainment Attributes 3 Entertainment Attributes 4	0.719	0.634 to 0.901	4(3)
Environmental Attributes	Environmental Attributes 1 Environmental Attributes 2 Environmental Attributes 3 Environmental Attributes 4	0.693	0.565 to 0.796	4(4)
Social & Cultural Attributes	Social & Cultural Attributes 1 Social & Cultural Attributes 2 Social & Cultural Attributes 3 Social & Cultural Attributes 5	0.759	0.562 to 0.889	5(4)
Attachment	Attachment 1 Attachment 2 Attachment 3 Attachment 4 Attachment 5	0.898	0.772 to 0.953	5(5)
Infrastructure	Infrastructure 1 Infrastructure 2 Infrastructure 3 Infrastructure 4 Infrastructure 6 Infrastructure 7 Infrastructure 8	0.907	0.591 to 0.934	8(7)
Involvement	Involvement 1 Involvement 2 Involvement 3 Involvement 4 Involvement 5	0.924	0.677 to 0.968	5(5)
Motivation	Motivation 1 Motivation 2 Motivation 3 Motivation 4 Motivation 5 Motivation 6	0.889	0.593 to 0.892	6(6)
Readiness	Readiness 1 Readiness 5 Readiness 6 Readiness 7	0.907	0.765 to 0.963	7(4)

Notes: Final items numbers (initial numbers)

4.5.1.4 t-Value

The results of the *t*-value analysis are shown in Table 4.7 that indicate all the measures of their respective constructs; namely, learning attributes, attachment, authentic rural experience, entertainment attributes, environmental attributes, infrastructure, involvement, motivation, readiness, social & cultural attributes. According to this test, all of the constructs were valid measures of their respective constructs in terms of the parameter estimates and statistical significance (Chow & Chan, 2008). Hence, the measurement items significantly explain the respective constructs.

Table 4.7: Summary Results of the Model Constructs

Model Construct	**Measurement Item**	**Standardize Estimate**	**t-Value**
Learning Attributes	Learning Attributes 1	0.554	9.554
	Learning Attributes 2	0.811	24.769
	Learning Attributes 3	0.719	17.767
	Learning Attributes 6	0.854	48.579
	Learning Attributes 7	0.648	13.821
Authentic Rural Experience	Authentic Rural Experience 1	0.847	86.661
	Authentic Rural Experience 2	0.940	178.898
	Authentic Rural Experience 3	0.755	22.377
	Authentic Rural Experience 4	0.828	41.497
Entertainment Attributes	Entertainment Attributes 1	0.901	114.299
	Entertainment Attributes 3	0.835	54.955
	Entertainment Attributes 4	0.634	17.086
Environmental Attributes	Environmental Attributes 1	0.796	41.760
	Environmental Attributes 2	0.684	13.594
	Environmental Attributes 3	0.773	20.410
	Environmental Attributes 4	0.565	14.158
Social & Cultural Attributes	Social & Cultural Attributes 1	0.881	19.050
	Social & Cultural Attributes 2	0.562	5.463
	Social & Cultural Attributes 3	0.889	20.013
	Social & Cultural Attributes 5	0.636	6.722

Table 4.7 continued

Attachment	**Attachment 1** **Attachment 2** **Attachment 3** **Attachment 4** **Attachment 5**	**0.816** **0.772** **0.953** **0.836** **0.835**	**35.684** **34.083** **255.700** **67.857** **35.904**
Infrastructure	Infrastructure 1 Infrastructure 2 Infrastructure 3 Infrastructure 4 Infrastructure 6 Infrastructure 7 Infrastructure 8	0.862 0.934 0.855 0.591 0.711 0.834 0.800	70.524 165.837 71.909 18.899 30.509 69.521 49.464
Involvement	Involvement 1 Involvement 2 Involvement 3 Involvement 4 Involvement 5	0.919 0.915 0.677 0.968 0.889	80.872 87.145 29.494 212.389 119.069
Motivation	Motivation 1 Motivation 2 Motivation 3 Motivation 4 Motivation 5 Motivation 6	0.821 0.593 0.781 0.796 0.892 0.847	41.122 11.923 39.226 39.452 103.403 50.545
Readiness	Readiness 1 Readiness 5 Readiness 6 Readiness 7	0.765 0.963 0.912 0.894	40.119 265.144 79.520 55.786

4.5.1.5 Discriminant Validity

Next, step is to check the discriminant validity with the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross loadings. In order to test the discriminant validity, the values of AVE were square rooted and tested against the inter correlations of the construct with other constructs in the research model (Komiak & Benbasat, 2006; Chin, 2010). According to Fornell Larcker criterion, the square root of AVE should load more strongly than the constructs highest correlation with

other construct in the model (Hair et al., 2014). As shown in Table 4.8, the square root of AVE for infrastructure in fifth row and column was 0.805, this is higher than the off-diagonal elements in the corresponding (0.305, 0.330, 0.581, 0.379) and also higher than the corresponding column (0.344, 0.283, 0.159, -0.140, 0.224). Furthermore, the square root of AVE for learning was 0.725, authentic rural experience was 0.845, entertainment was 0.798, social and cultural attributes was 0.756, attachment was 0.845, infrastructure was 0.805, involvement was 0.880, motivation was 0.794, and readiness was 0.886

Table 4.8: Discriminant Validity of Constructs

	Attach	**ARE**	**EA**	**Envir_Att**	**Infra**	**Involv**	**LA**	**Motiv**	**Readi**	**SCA**
Attach	0.845									
ARE	0.468	0.845								
Enter_Att	0.369	0.449	0.798							
EA	0.485	0.235	0.356	0.710						
Infra	0.379	0.581	0.330	0.305	0.805					
Involv	0.447	0.113	-0.054	0.331	0.344	0.880				
LA	0.173	0.312	0.300	0.115	0.283	-0.172	0.725			
Motiv	0.638	0.177	0.374	0.299	0.159	0.253	0.245	0.794		
Readi	-0.146	-0.427	-0.345	-0.208	-0.140	0.005	0.051	0.269	0.886	
SCA	0.287	0.226	0.407	0.338	0.224	0.040	0.123	0.176	-0.222	0.756

Notes: LA=Learning Attributes, Attach=Attachment, ARE_Att= Authentic Rural Experience Attribute, Enter_Att=Entertainment Attributes, EA=Environmental Attributes, Infra=Infrastructure, Involv=Involvement, Motiv=Motivation, Readi=Readiness, and SCA =Social & Cultural Attributes,

Based on the assessment results of the measurement model, it can be concluded that the items exhibited satisfactory reliability and construct validity that was evidenced by suitable reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity. Figure 4.2 shows the loadings for each of the items and beta values for the variables.

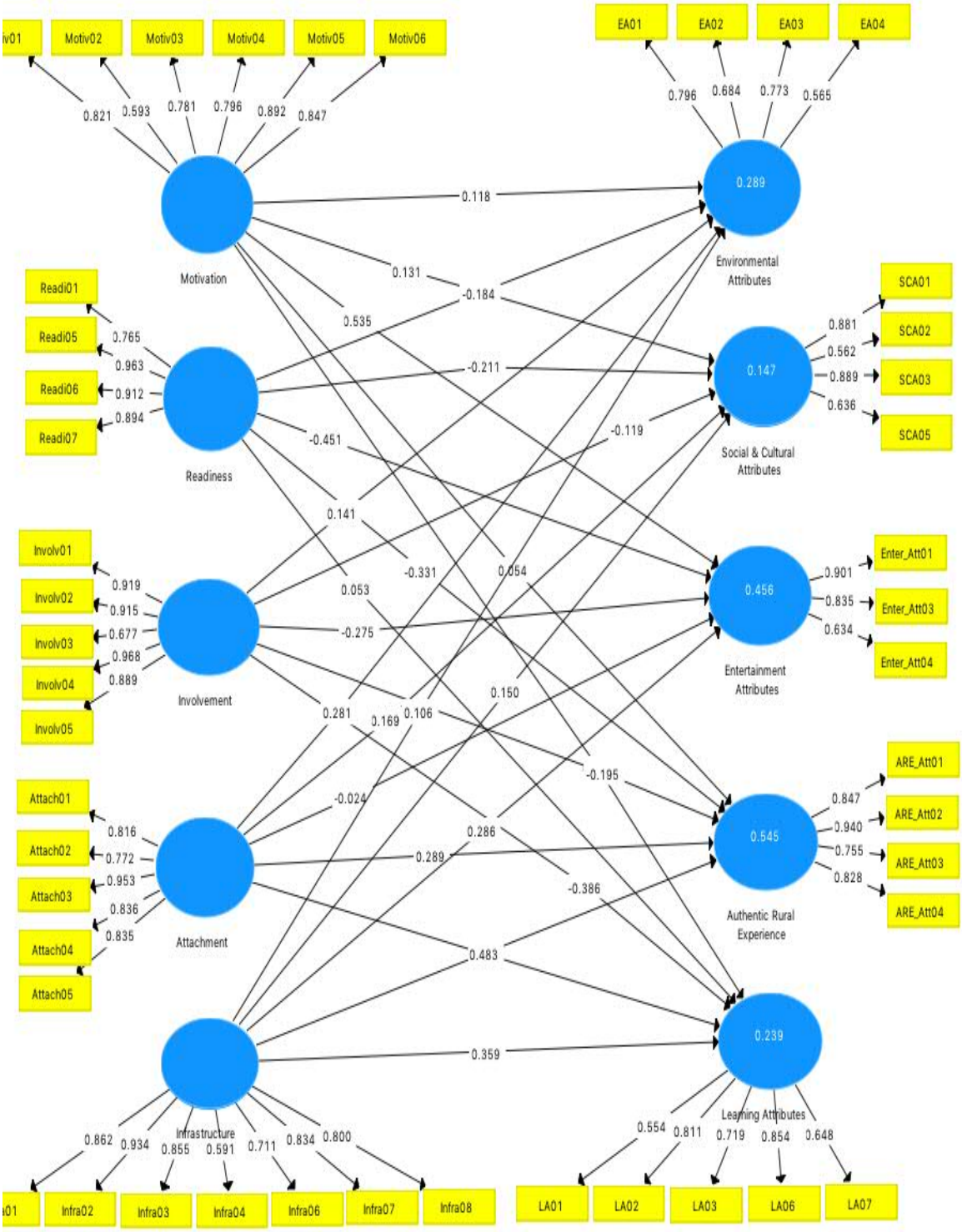


Figure 4.2: Research Model with Beta Values

4.6 Assessment of the Structural Model

After validating all the constructs in the measurement model, next step was to assess the structural model. The purpose of testing the structural model was to test the underlying hypotheses in order to answer the research questions. Firstly, the researcher examined the collinearity, followed by blindfolding, assessing the significance and relevance of the structural model, level of coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and effect size (f^2).

4.6.1 Multicollinearity

SEM has become a commonly used tool for theory testing due to its ability to account for measurement error and manage multiple endogenous constructs (Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 2000). The widespread use of SEM has led to a growing literature that addresses various application problems. One of these problems is multicollinearity, that is high correlations among the latent exogenous constructs (Grewal, Cote, & Baumgartner, (2004). Hair et al., (2014) noted that the reason to examine collinearity is that the estimation of path coefficients in the structural model is based on Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression of each endogenous latent variable on its corresponding predecessor constructs. Hair et al., (2011) recommended a variance inflation factor (VIF) value of 5.00 and above indicate high level of collinearity problem among the independent variables. Table 4.9 presents the outcome of the collinearity test in this study. The results showed that the VIF value is lower than 5.00. Therefore, there is no potential collinearity problem in this research.

Table 4.9: Collinearity Assessment

	VIF		VIF
LA01	2.457	Motiv01	2.475
LA02	2.689	Motiv02	1.712
LA03	2.050	Motiv03	2.488
LA06	1.961	Motiv04	2.000
LA07	2.652	Motiv05	3.200
		Motiv06	2.636
SCA01	4.617	Readi01	1.682
SCA02	3.153	Readi05	2.563
SCA03	3.698	Readi06	3.790
SCA05	3.294	Readi07	3.751
ARE_Att01	2.069	Involv01	3.400
ARE_Att02	4.429	Involv02	4.333
ARE_Att03	1.785	Involv03	1.625
ARE_Att04	2.536	Involv04	2.088
		Involv05	3.554
Enter_Att01	1.672	Attach01	2.328
Enter_Att03	1.635	Attach02	1.907
Enter_Att04	1.231	Attach03	4.967
		Attach04	2.470
		Attach05	2.566
EA01	1.218	Infra01	4.717
EA02	2.123	Infra02	3.779
EA03	2.387	Infra03	3.343
EA04	1.119	Infra04	1.575
		Infra06	1.951
		Infra07	2.448
		Infra08	2.305

Notes: LA=Learning Attributes, Attach=Attachment, ARE_Att= Authentic Rural Experience Attribute, Enter_Att=Entertainment Attributes, EA=Environmental Attributes, Infra=Infrastructure, Involv=Involvement, Motiv=Motivation, Readi=Readiness, and SCA =Social & Cultural Attributes,

4.6.2 Hypotheses Testing

PLS modeling was applied to test and validate the proposed hypotheses. SmartPLS was used to test the 25 proposed hypotheses regarding the local community's perspective on the positioning of rural tourism in Sarawak, Malaysia. This study used t-values to test the hypotheses; we considered a hypothesis to be confirmed when the t-value exceeded 1.645, which indicates significance at 0.5 level ($p < 0.05$) (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). The empirical findings from data testing that support and do not support the proposed hypotheses are presented in Table 4.10 and the t-values for each variable are demonstrated in Figure 4.3. The supported hypotheses were H1b, H1c, H1d, H1e, H3c, H4a, H4c, H4e, H5a, H5b, H5c, H5d, and H5e. However, the results revealed that a few hypotheses were not supported such as H1a, H2a, H2b, H2c, H2d, H2e, H3a, H3b, H3d, H3e, and H4b, H4d. Further details about the hypotheses are presented in the following section.

4.6.2.1 Community Motivation and Positioning of Rural Tourism

H1: The local community's motivation positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination

Hypothesis 1 examined the relationship between the local community's motivations for rural tourism and the positioning of rural tourism, which includes environmental attributes, social and cultural attributes, entertainment attributes, authentic rural experiences, and learning. As depicted in Table 4.10, the local community's motivation positively affects the local social and cultural attributes (β=0.535, t=11.036; H1b) in which it exceeded the recommended value

of 1.645 (<0.05). Furthermore, the local community's motivation positively affects entertainment attributes (β=0.118, t=1.960; H1c), and authentic rural experiences (β=0.226, t=4.523; H1d), and learning attributes (β=0.131, t=2.144; H1e). Hence H1c, H1d and H1e were all supported. However, H1a, the community's motivation was not found to affect environmental attributes (β=0.054, t=1.544; H1a). Therefore, the relationship between the local community's motivation and positioning of a rural tourism destination was partially supported.

4.6.2.2 Community Readiness and Positioning of Rural Tourism

H2: The local community's readiness positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination.

For hypothesis 2, it was hypothesized that the local community's readiness would positively affect the positioning of the rural tourism destination. However contrary to the expectations, it was found that the local community's readiness did not positively affect the positioning of the rural tourism destination. The empirical results showed, that environmental attributes (β=-0.331, t=11.092; H2a), social and cultural attributes (β=-0.451, t=13.276; H2b), entertainment attributes (β=-0.184, t=4.220; H2c), and learning attributes (β=-0.211, t=3.440; H2e), inversely affected the positioning of the rural tourism destination. Only the authentic rural experience was affected positively by the community's readiness (β=0.053, t=1.115; H2d). Hence, it was concluded that the local community's readiness does not affect the positioning of the rural tourism destination.

4.6.2.3 Community Involvement and Positioning of Rural Tourism

H3: The local community's involvement positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination.

Hypothesis 3 investigated the relationship between the local community's involvement and the positioning of the rural tourism destination. After the analysis, the researcher found that community involvement does not significantly affect the environmental attributes (β=-0.195, t=7.644; H3a), social and cultural attributes (β=-0.275, t=7.384; H3b), authentic rural experience (β=-0.386, t=9.530; H3d), and learning (β=-0.119, t=2.581; H3e). While only the entertainment attributes (β=0.141, t=2.738; H3c) were found to be positively affected by community involvement. Thus, the relationship between the community's involvement and the positioning of the rural tourism was partially supported.

4.6.2.4 Community Attachment and Positioning of Rural Tourism

H4: The local community's attachment positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination.

Hypothesis 4 examined the relationship between community's attachment and positioning of the rural tourism destination. The empirical results from our statistical analysis showed that H4b, social and cultural attributes were not found to be affect and it was inversely related to the dependent variable (β=-0.024, t=0.431; H4b). H4d authentic rural experience (β=0.073, t=1.474) was also not found to affect positioning of rural tourism. Others three hypotheses

H4a, H4c and H4e were fully supported and community's attachment positively affected the environmental attributes (β=0.289, t=6.829; H4a), entertainment attributes (β=0.281, t=4.951; H4c), and learning attributes (β=0.169, t=1.596; H4e). Therefore, the relationship between the local community's attachment and the positioning of the rural tourism destination was partially supported.

4.6.2.5 Local Infrastructure and Positioning of Rural Tourism

H5: The local infrastructure positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination

For hypothesis 5, it was hypothesized that the local infrastructure positively affects the positioning of the rural tourism destination. After the statistical analysis it was found that all of the hypotheses H5a, H5b, H5c, H5d, and H5e were supported. The local infrastructure positively affected the environmental attributes (β=0.483, t=17.809; H5a), social and cultural attributes (β=0.286, t=10.870; H5b), entertainment attributes (β=0.106, t=2.701; H5c), authentic rural experience (β=0.359, t=9.895; H5d), and learning attributes (β=0.150, t=3.059; H5e).

Table 4.10: Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta Value	t-Value	Decision
H1	**The local community's motivation positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination**			**Partially Supported**
H1a	The local community's motivation positively affects environmental attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.054	1.544	Not Supported
H1b	The local community's motivation positively affects social & cultural attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.535	11.036	Supported
H1c	The local community's positively affects entertainment attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.118	1.960	Supported
H1d	The local community's motivation positively affects authentic rural experience of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.226	4.523	Supported
H1e	The local community's motivation positively affects learning attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.131	2.144	Supported
H2	**The local community's readiness positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination.**			**Not Supported**
H2a	The local community's readiness positively affects environmental attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	-0.331	11.092	Not Supported
H2b	The local community's readiness positively affects social & cultural attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	-0.451	13.276	Not Supported
H2c	The local community's readiness positively affects entertainment attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	-0.184	4.220	Not Supported

Table 4.10 continued

H2d	**The local community's readiness positively affects authentic rural experience of positioning rural tourism destination.**	**0.053**	**1.115**	**Not Supported**
H2e	The local community's readiness positively affects learning attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	-0.211	3.440	Not Supported
H3	**The local community's involvement positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination.**			**Partially Supported**
H3a	The local community's involvement positively affects environmental attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	-0.195	7.644	Not Supported
H3b	The local community's involvement positively affects social & cultural attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	-0.275	7.384	Not Supported
H3c	The local community's involvement positively affects entertainment attributes of positioning rural tourism destination	0.141	2.738	Supported
H3d	The local community's involvement positively affects authentic rural experience of positioning rural tourism destination.	-0.386	9.530	Not Supported
H3e	The local community's involvement positively affects learning attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	-0.119	2.581	Not Supported
H4	**The local community's attachment positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination.**			**Partially Supported**
H4a	The local community's attachment positively affects environmental attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.289	6.829	Supported
H4b	The local community's attachment positively affects social & cultural attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	-0.024	0.431	Not Supported

Table 4.10 continued

H4c	**The local community's attachment positively affects entertainment attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.**	**0.281**	**4.951**	**Supported**
H4d	The local community's attachment positively affects authentic rural experience of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.073	1.474	Not Supported
H4e	The local community's attachment positively affects learning attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.169	2.596	Supported
H5	**The local infrastructure positively affects positioning of rural tourism destination**			**Supported**
H5a	The local infrastructure positively affects environmental attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.483	17.809	Supported
H5b	The local infrastructure positively affects social & cultural attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.286	10.870	Supported
H5c	The local infrastructure positively affects entertainment attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.106	2.701	Supported
H5d	The local infrastructure positively affects authentic rural experience of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.359	9.895	Supported
H5e	The local infrastructure positively affects learning attributes of positioning rural tourism destination.	0.150	3.059	Supported

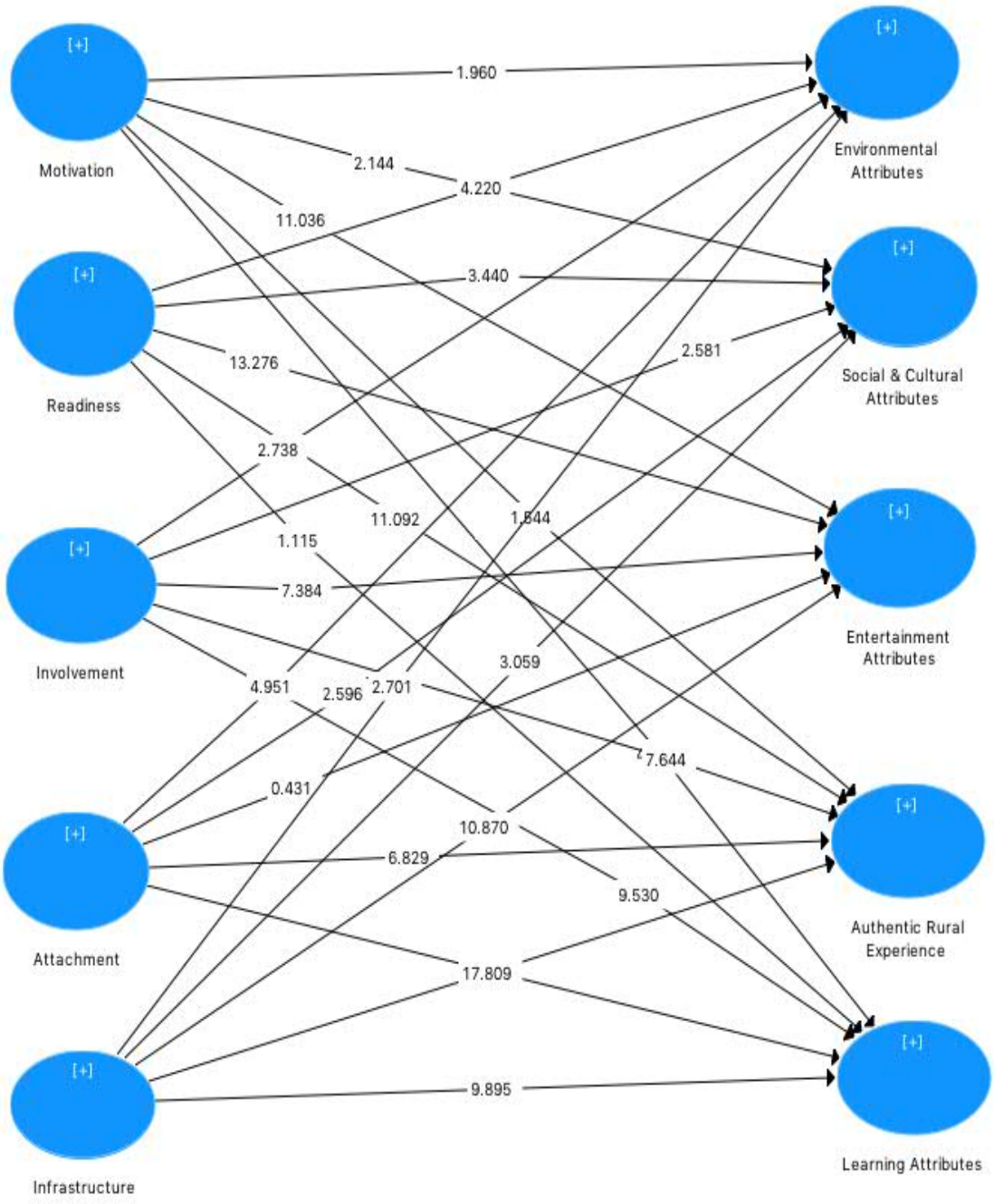


Figure 4.3: Research Model with t-Values

4.6.3 Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The Partial Least Square (PLS) analysis also provides the model capability to predict, that is Predictive Relevance (Q^2) and coefficient of determination (R^2 value). The coefficient represents the exogenous latent variables' combined effects on the endogenous latent variable (Hair et al., 2014). The R^2 value, which ranges from 0 to 1 is the measure of the model's level of predictive accuracy. For R^2 a value above 0.67 is considered substantial, 0.33 is considered moderate, and 0.19 is deemed as weak (Chin, 1998a). Table 4.11 shows that the R^2 value for environmental attributes is 0.289, suggesting that 28.9% of the variance in the extent of environmental attributes is explained by exogenous variables, namely attachment, infrastructure, involvement, motivation, and readiness. This value of R^2 implies that the environmental attributes achieved a weak to moderate level in this research study. However, it managed to demonstrate fit of the proposed model to the aggregate data.

The R^2 value for learning attributes was 0.339, suggesting that the exogenous variables in this study explain 33.9% of the variance in learning attributes. Furthermore, the R^2 value for authentic rural experience was 0.545, with 54.5% of the variance explained by the exogenous variables. The R^2 value for entertainment attributes was 0.456, suggesting that exogenous variables explain 45.6% of the variance in entertainment attributes. Lastly, the R^2 value for social and cultural attributes was 0.347, with 34.7% of the variance explained by the exogenous variables. Therefore, the R^2 values represent the exogenous variable's combined effect on the endogenous variables.

Stone-Geisser's Q^2 value predicts the data points of the indicators in the reflective measurement models of endogenous constructs and endogenous single item constructs. Hair et al. (2014) states that if the Q^2 value is larger than zero, it shows the path model's predictive relevance for the construct. A blindfolding procedure was applied for the Q^2 values. This procedure is the sample reuse technique that omits every dth data point in the endogenous construct's indicators and estimates the parameters with the remaining data points (Chin, 1998b; Henseler et al*.,* 2009). To achieve Q^2 values, an omission distance of 5 was used. The Q^2 values can be obtained by cross-validated redundancy and cross-validated communality. Cross-validated redundancy is based on the prediction of the data points by means of the structural model and measurement model to obtain Q^2 values, whereas cross-validated communality is based on the prediction of the data points by means of the measurement model to acquire Q^2 values. This study used cross-validated redundancy as the measure of Q^2 to build the path model estimates of both the structural model and measurement model of the data prediction. Cross-validated redundancy uses the PLS-SEM estimates for data prediction, and was therefore deemed a suitable approach. Table 4.11 shows the Q^2 values, which demonstrates that all of the exogenous variables possess predictive ability over the endogenous variables.

Table 4.11: Results of Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Construct	R Square (R^2)	Predictive Relevance (Q^2)
Learning Attributes	0.339	0.298
Authentic Rural Experience	0.545	0.331
Entertainment Attributes	0.456	0.235
Environmental Attributes	0.289	0.199
Social & Cultural Attributes	0.347	0.262

4.6.4 Effect Size (f^2)

Effect size (f^2) evaluates a specified exogenous construct that omitted form the model has a substantive impact on the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2014). Effect size equation is:

$$f^2 = (R^2_{included} - R^2_{excluded}) \div (1 - R^2_{included})$$

$R^2_{included}$ and $R^2_{excluded}$ are the R^2 values of the endogenous latent variable when a selected exogenous latent variable is included or excluded from the model. An effect size of 0.02 is small, 0.15 is medium, and 0.35 is large (Cohen, 1998). Table 4.12 shows the effect size of the community's perspective on learning attributes. The exogenous variables attachment and readiness had none to a small effect size on learning attributes (f^2 = 0.003 and f^2 = 0.003, respectively). Moreover, infrastructure (f^2 = 0.137), involvement (f^2 = 0.147), and motivation (f^2 = 0.030) have small to medium effect sizes on learning attributes.

Table 4.12: Effect Size (f^2) on Learning Attributes

Construct	**Learning Attributes**	Effect Size
Attachment	0.003	None to small
Infrastructure	0.137	Small to Medium
Involvement	0.147	Small to Medium
Motivation	0.030	Small to medium
Readiness	0.003	None to small

Table 4.13 shows the effect size on authentic rural experience. The exogenous variables attachment (f^2 = 0.072), infrastructure (f^2 = 0.313), involvement (f^2 = 0.063), and readiness (f^2

= 0.179) had a small to medium effect size on authentic rural experience. Moreover, motivation (f^2 = 0.003) had none to a small effect size on authentic rural experience.

Table 4.13: Effect Size (f^2) on Authentic Rural Experience

Construct	**Authentic Rural Experience**	Effect Size
Attachment	0.072	Small to medium
Infrastructure	0.313	Small to Medium
Involvement	0.063	Small to medium
Motivation	0.003	None to small
Readiness	0.179	Small to Medium

Table 4.14 shows the effect size on entertainment attributes. The exogenous variables namely attachment (f^2=0.000) has none to small effect size on entertainment attributes. Moreover, infrastructure (f^2=0.121), involvement (f^2=0. 104), motivation (f^2=0.238), and readiness (f^2=0.003) have medium effect size on entertainment attributes.

Table 4.14: Effect Size (f^2) on Entertainment Attributes

Construct	**Entertainment Attributes**	Effect Size
Attachment	0.000	None
Infrastructure	0.121	Medium
Involvement	0.104	Medium
Motivation	0.238	Medium
Readiness	0.278	Medium

Table 4.15 shows the effect size on environmental attributes. The exogenous variables namely attachment (f^2=0.043) has small to medium effect size on environmental attributes. Moreover, infrastructure (f^2=0.013) have none to small, involvement (f^2=0.021) small to medium,

motivation (f^2=0.009) have none to small effect size on environmental attributes. Lastly, readiness (f^2=0.036) has small to medium effect size on environmental attributes.

Table 4.15: Effect Size (f^2) on Environmental Attributes

Construct	**Environmental Attributes**	Effect Size
Attachment	0.043	Small to medium
Infrastructure	0.013	None to small
Involvement	0.021	Small to medium
Motivation	0.009	None to small
Readiness	0.036	Small to medium

Table 4.16 shows the effect size on social & cultural attribute. The exogenous variables namely attachment (f^2=0.013) has none to small effect size on social & cultural attribute. Moreover, infrastructure (f^2=0.021), have small to medium, involvement (f^2=0.012), motivation (f^2=0.009) have none to small effect size on social & cultural attribute. Lastly, readiness (f^2=0.039) has small to medium effect size on social & cultural attribute.

Table 4.16: Effect Size (f^2) on Social & Cultural Attributes

Construct	**Social & Cultural Attributes**	Effect Size
Attachment	0.013	None to small
Infrastructure	0.021	Small to medium
Involvement	0.012	None to small
Motivation	0.009	None to small
Readiness	0.039	Small to medium

4.7 Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the various analyses that tested the model reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, and tested the formulated hypotheses. The findings from the analysis included 13 supported hypotheses out of 25. The findings of the study have contributed empirical evidence on the effect of the local community's perspective on the positioning of rural tourism in Malaysia. A complete discussion of the formulated hypotheses, followed by theoretical and practical implications, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are presented in next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The current research aimed to identify the relationship between the local community's perspective (i.e., motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, and infrastructure) and the perceived positioning of their place as a tourism destination (i.e., the destination's environmental, social and cultural, entertainment, authentic rural experience, and learning attributes). Specifically, the study has two main objectives. The first objective is to explore the local community's perspective towards positioning of rural tourism destination, which is previously undermined and second objective is to explore the perceived positioning of tourism destination by the residents of rural communities. To meet these objectives, the current study attempted to answer the question, "Does the local community's perspective about tourism affect their perceived positioning of rural tourism in Sarawak, Malaysia?"

In the current research, the local community's perspective constitutes the independent variable that was classified into five dimensions, namely the community's motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, and the tourism infrastructure. The positioning of a rural tourism destination was considered as the dependent variable that was categorized into five dimensions, namely environmental attributes, social and cultural attributes, entertainment attributes, authentic rural experience, and learning attributes. For the analysis of the data, various statistical tools were used to validate and test the formulated hypotheses.

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate the findings and limitations of the research in order to establish the implications for rural tourism planning, especially in formulating positioning strategy and suggestions for future research. Furthermore, this chapter also provides an overall review of the results, discussions, limitations and future suggestions and a conclusion.

5.2 Discussion

Rural tourism has grown considerably over the past decades and is now a major contributor to the economies of numerous developing countries. The growing importance of the tourism industry is shown in Malaysia's revenue, where tourism has become the second largest contributor to GDP. Nature-based tourism in rural areas is growing in popularity, as Malaysia is rich in natural resources; however, the country faces intensive competition and issues in positioning rural tourism. Although some research has indicated that the local community's perspective is valuable in creating unique identity (of the Malaysian tourism industry), literature on the subject is sparse. Considering the potential effect that tourist could have on a destination image, previous researchers may have underestimated and overlooked the community's perceived positioning of a tourism destination. As stated by Olsson and Sandru (2006), there can be a conflict in how a specific brand is positioned in the target markets mind and the brand personality perceived by the brand owner/manager. By identifying the true traits and positions of the product, its identity can be better understood. Hwang et al., (2014) also emphasised that the tourism destination development should begin with an understanding of the community's subjectivities, as they are aware of their role as stakeholders in tourism. Hence the current research added to the sparse body of tourism research linking a destination's positioning and the local community's perspective.

This research has attempted, despite the lack of existing studies, to empirically examine and explore a new set of significant predictors (i.e. motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, and infrastructure) on the perceived positioning of a rural tourism destination by local residents of a particular rural tourism destination, that kind of relationship has never been investigated in the past literature. Furthermore, the research also attempts to examine, whether the proposed predictors, presented unique contributions to the positioning of a rural tourism destination (i.e., environmental, social and cultural, entertainment, authentic rural experience, and learning attributes). Besides it has also investigated the impact of local community's perspective on positioning rural tourism destination. Moreover, the findings imply the importance of residents' community's perspective and suggest that a successful destination branding is not achievable without the proper inclusion of its local residents, their motivation to support and develop tourism, overall knowledge about local products and attractions, attachment to their community, and a good local infrastructure.

To summarize the findings, 13 out of 25 hypotheses were supported and 12 were not supported. Two hypotheses H4a and H5a were found to have direct and positively relationship with environmental attributes. H1b, and H5b were directly and positively related to social and cultural attributes. Four hypotheses H1c, H3c, H4c and H5d were found to have direct and positive association with entertainment attributes. H1d and H5d were found to have direct and positive association with authentic rural experience. While three hypotheses, namely, H1e, H4e, and H5e were having direct and positive relationship with learning attributes. The key findings will be revealed in the following sections, along with justifications as to why some hypotheses were supported whereas others were not.

5.2.1 The Local Community's Perspective and the Positioning of Rural Tourism Destinations

This section discusses the findings pertaining to the main research question, that is whether the local community's perspective about tourism (i.e., motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, and tourism infrastructure) about tourism affects their perceived positioning of rural tourism in Sarawak Malaysia, in terms of (i.e., environmental attributes, social and cultural attributes, entertainment attributes, authentic rural experience, and learning attributes).

5.2.1.1 The Local Community's Motivation and Positioning of Rural Tourism Destination (H1)

The statistical analyses indicated that the local community's motivation positively affected the social and cultural attributes (H1b), entertainment attributes (H1c), authentic rural experience (H1d), and learning attributes (H1e). However, the local community's motivation did not have an impact on the environmental attributes (H1a). Hence, the results show partial support for the hypothesis that the local community's motivation positively affects the positioning of the rural tourism destination and the justification of the supported and unsupported hypotheses are as follow.

Solomon, Russell-Bennett and Previte (2012) define motivation as a process that leads people to behave as they do, and the process begins when a need arises. In this study, the need is tourism. Getz and Carlsen (2000) as well as Kim and Butler (2015) have found that local

communities are driven by various motivations to initiate a tourism business, such as economic benefits, as well as social and psychological benefits. Schroeder (2004) found that for tourism operators in North Dakota, financial success was not rated higher than other motivations, such as building personal relationships and civic mindedness. In other word these study shows that rural communities are more motivated to position their destinations on the basis of non-financial attributes. This is in line with the findings of Ollenburg and Buckley (2007), who found that social motivations were marginally more important than economic motivations. Ahmad et al., (2014) also supported the significance of more social motivations in rural communities by investigating start-up motivation of rural entrepreneurs. They found that the main motivation of homestay operators was to get personal satisfaction from tourism activities. Similarly McKercher, Ho, and du Cros (2005) also highlighted cultural preservation as one of the motivations of the local communities to be involved in rural tourism. Thus, these studies show that communities are largely motivated to position their destinations based on non-financial attributes.

Interestingly, the results of present study revealed that the local community's motivation is not related to the positioning of a rural destination based on the environmental attributes, therefore H1a was not supported. However, the results are contarary with the previous literature which has highlighted the conservation of the natural, cultural and built environments as an important motivation for the initiation of tourism businesses (Muhanna, 2006). In other words, communities with motivations for environmental conservation would like to present it as a tourism product, so they can have proper rules, regulations and enforcement to protect the natural resources. For this study, it was assumed that local community motivation, to position their destination on environmental attributes, depends on

preservation and conservation of their natural environment. Hence reason for the rejection of this hypothesis could be that it is difficult for small rural communities to connect their surrounding environment to global issues. This finding concurs with studies like Stetic (2012), who have explored that creating a rural tourism destination in a preserved environment is only the beginning of this process. The further destiny of this destination depends on proper planning for the tourism resources, which is possible after the meaningful local inclusion. Another possible reason for the uncofirmed hypothesis, could be that the selected research sites are very diverse; they range from ecotourism sites to culturaly based longhouses. Participants from cultural tourism sites gave more importance to rural, social and cultural attributes than to environmental attributes. This argument is also supported by Kronik and Verner (2010), who revealed that communities dependent on secondary forest and cash crops are less aware of environemental effects and in case of climate change are less vulnerable than more traditional groups.

The results revealed that all the other four hypotheses H1b, H1c, H1d, and H1e were supported. H1b measured the effect of local community's motivation positvely affects the positioning of a rural tourism destination on social and cutural attributes. This finding is in line with Ibrahim and Razzaq (2010), who have found that more tourists want to experience homestay with local community, while appreciating their culture, heritage and lifestyle. This shows that by increasing demands from tourists, more communities are willing to share their social and cultural life with tourists and also earning at the same time. Hypothesis H1c illustrated that the local community's motivation positively affects entertainment attributes. This is also evidenced in the research by Jaafar, Abdul-Aziz, Maideen, and Mohd (2011), who found that Malaysian rural tourism entrepreneurs were motivated to promote their place to

enjoy a good lifestyle, and to support local community leisure interest with tourists. Thus community memebers may have a mixture of motivations to join the tourism business; they may have economic aims and social objectives, such as achieving a higher quality of life.

Similarly, hypotheses H1d and H1e illustrated that the local community's motivation also positively affected the authentic rural experience and learning attributes of a destination. Studies by Ollenburg (2007) support these results, farm tourism business owners were motivated by various aspects, amongst which sharing the traditional rural experience with the visitors was one of them. Moreover, Rid, Ezeuduji, and Pröbstl-Haider (2014) examined the key characteristics of rural toursim in Gambia; they found that the experience of heritage and nature, as well as learning local dances were valued by tourists. The more a local community is motivated to share their knowledge and rural experiences with tourists, the more tourists' interest will increase. To support this argument, Cohen (1998) explains that commoditisation of culture as a tourism product may actually preserve traditions by generating demand and attaching value to them.

5.2.1.2 The Local Community's Readiness and Positioning of Rural Tourism Destination (H2)

This section describes the discussion on hypothesis 2 (H2). However contrary to the expectations, statistical analysis of H2 showed that local community's readiness was not found to have positive affect on any of the positioning attributes. The following section provides clarifications and justifications to answer the rejected hypotheses.

Community readiness for tourism is an essential component for any rural tourism destination to be positioned as a successful tourism destination. However, Balint (2006) illustrated that the community level of competence, ability and skills of establishing and running tourism enterprises are necessary to set and achieve relevant goals. This also shows that if a particular community lack the required skills to manage day to day tourism tasks then it may affect the overall tourist experience and tourism image. This is supported by Johari et al., (2015) who highlight the importance of community readiness in one of the key tourism destination in Sarawak, Malaysia. Further, Albayrak, Caber, Hutcheson, and Moutinho (2016), have stated that being a service industry, tourism strongly require its operators to be ready for not only providing professional services to its consumers but also able to face daily challenges in this field. Also Moscardo (2008) have emphasised on community readiness for tourism management, as without proper planning tourism may have negative outcomes for both, the locals and the tourists.

The hypothesis H2a, presented the relationship between local community readiness and environmental attributes of a rural destination. The rejection of this hypothesis shows that some local communities do not consider themselves ready for the use of environmental resources as tourism attraction in their destination. While few of them consider it the government responsibility to manage these natural resources. Researchers such as Jones (2005) and Sunkar, Meilani, and Muntasib (2015), found that local community have a strong role in sustainable use of tourism resources. Their poor management practices could threaten and harm the environment of a destination. Jones (2005) states that not just tourism operators but also the community has to be ready to help manage and protect the environmental attraction.

Moreover, it was found that the result for hypothesis H2b, measuring relationship between local community readiness and social and cultural attributes, contrasted with the findings of Liu (2006). Her study found that lack of local capacity for tourism business and less awareness of local tourism products could negatively affect its attractiveness. In other words, it implies that local community have to be capable to have a successful tourism business at their destination. Just tourism attractions are not enough to make a place a successful tourism destination but wide spread contribution of the local community in all the tourism related component is the foremost requirement. This is according to the findings by (Wilson, et al,. 2001). The data selected for the current study shows that there is a strong need of awareness and training program for the local people. In addition, Figueiredo and Raschi (2012) explored the link between readiness of tourism operators and intangible aspects of rural tourism and found that community members have a strong connection to rural tourism attractions. They feel concerned about the protection and sustainable use of these resources. So their training would help and create individuals businesses and then letting them compete in the marketplace.

Statistical analysis of Hypothesis H2c, measuring local community readiness effect on entertainment attributes showed negative relationship. This means that selected local communities do not have the capabilities to provide entertainment activities to attract the tourists. According to the findings of Russell, & Faulkner (2004), lack of readiness in local community could result in lack of creativity in preparing tourism products and weakening uniqueness in rurality aspect. Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, (2016) highlight the key success criteria and barriers in order to mobilise global knowledge for increasing the development of successful rural tourism. Their study further argue that capacity building of the rural

community is one of the important factors that help to create a unique identity. Further to build capacity in terms of business skills, marketing, advertising and promotions, etc., and create partnerships with the private sector (e.g. tour operators and other accommodations) to market to promote local tourism product. Further, hypothesis H2d contrasted with the findings of Zhou (2014), who found that rural tourism in any destination consists of rural locality, representations of the rural community in different events and their everyday lives. In other words, it means that altogether these features make the rural tourism experience interesting for tourist but it is only possible if the local community have the required capacity for these tourism activities. However rural destinations cannot get required results if tourism products are not designed based on market demand and are not developed in partnership with external collaborators who can assist in providing necessary skills and training and provide market access (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2016). Lastly, hypothesis H2e, measuring local community readiness effect on learning attributes of positioning a destination, conflicted with the study of Kamarudin et al., (2015). Their study has argued that the local community owns the culture and natural resources and therefore is responsible for providing the accurate use of these resources in the form of tourism products to tourists. In other words, the local people capacity is important to uphold the true objectives of rural tourism, such as, their willingness to teach local dance, language, handicraft or cooking food. This is also supported by few other studies (such Slater et al., 2005; Moscardo, 2008; MacLellan-Wright et al., 2007; Aref, 2011), who have noted that skill and knowledge of the local people are one of the key aspects of community readiness that must exist in the positioning of a tourism destination as it can help to effectively influence the tourism planning process.

From researcher's point of view, there could be two factors that result in the rejection of this

hypothesis. First, to achieve high yield tourism, the government has set standards for different tourism products, including rural tourism (MOTAC, 2014). For example, for a village committee to register a homestay association, they need to have a specific number of houses, with a minimum number of rooms and other related facilities. However, this infrastructure needs to be developed by the community with their own resources. With limited number of economic opportunity, it was observed that process of homestay development very slow and local communities always consider themselves as "not ready" to apply for registration despite of having potential for tourism attractions (Kunjuraman, & Hussin, 2017). This also bars them to apply for government support for human resource and infrastructure development that can only come after the homestay registration. The second factor responsible for the observed results in our research could be, the level of education and exposure of the community members. Majority of the respondents have education of secondary level (Table 4.1). Although secondary education as such is not considered low, it is still believed that it may have influenced the confidence level of the participants. The community members could have been less confident about their skills and knowledge of the tourism business

This in turn could have lead them to feel as if they are not fully ready to lead tourism activities and to solve day-to-day tourism related challenges. During our field visits respondents frequently mentioned that they heavily rely on government and tourism officials to provide them training and funds for tourism developments. They mentioned that local community members are not aware about the needs and preferences of tourists so they face problem when deciding *"what to offer"* to tourists. This includes food, tourism activities and forests tracks; hence they just prefer to offer their place as accommodation and do not provide more than that.

5.2.1.3 The Local Community Involvement and Positioning of Rural Tourism Destination (H3)

The third hypothesis, H3 was that the local community involvement should positively affect the positioning of their place as a rural tourism destination. However, results revealed that, the local community's involvement did not affect environmental attributes (H3a) social & cultural attributes (H3b), authentic rural experience attributes (H3d) and learning attributes (H3e). Only one hypothesis, entertainment attributes (H3c) was found to be confirmed. Thus, at most the reults partially support the hypothesis regarding the local community's involvement, and the justification of the supported and unsupported hypotheses are as follow.

Ertuna and Kırbaş (2012) as well as Razzaq et al., (2011) revealed that the local community's involvement in tourism activities at their homelands is vital for the sustainable growth of rural tourism at a destination. Din (1993) defines involvement as the local community's active participation in decision-making and management of tourism activities for tourists. The community's involvement creates a sense of ownership among residents and also helps builds relationship among tourism stakeholders to perform their tasks efficiently (Timothy & Tosun, 2003). Furthermore, having the local residents participate in the tourism development and planning results in sustainable results for tourism business (Edgell et al., 2008). However, results of the current study have not found any relationship between local community's involvement and environmental attributes, therefore hypothesis H3a was not supported. This result is not in line with the study of Sampaio, Thomas, and Font (2012), who have argued that local involvement in tourism development activities will benefit both, the protection of natural resources and local community's personal satisfaction of having control over their

resources. Same arguments have been presented by Zhong, Deng, Song, and Ding (2011) that the involvement of the local residents will help in protecting and managing the natural resources in a sustainable way. The rejection in this case shows that slelected local communitues do not consider their control over their surrounding environment and in turn they also do not feel any responsibilities regarding the protection of these natural resources. This argument is also supported by Kronik, et al., (2010), who found that there is less significant relationship between the local communities and their environment if the community does not have control of or they do not depend on these natural resources.

Statistical analysis of hypothesis H3c, measuring relationship between local involvement and positioning on entertainment attributes, showed significant result and was supported. The results are congruent with the findings of Johannesson et al., (2003) who recognized that the community members willingness to support tourism activities will make the place attractive, and make the community members more open to share and learn with the visitors. Stetic (2012) have explained that rural tourism will brings an opportunity for the local residents to get involve in different segments of tourism as for the implementation of different tourism events, which not only provide economic return but also enjoyable recreational activities.

On the other hand, hypothesis H3b, measuring the relationship between the local involvement and the positioning of destination on social and cultural attributes, was not supported. This result is contrary to the literature that has emphasized the importance of the community members's involvement in rural tourism activities arranged for tourists (such as Dogan Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2010; Nicely & Sydnor, 2015; Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009). Likewise, the local inclusion in tourism events will not only promotes the culture but also

helps to improve social and cultural conservation. Although if local community feels the lack of awareness and innovative ideas to prepare cultural activities for tourists then it may result in less satisfied tourists and low interest from the local community (Liu, 2006). The rationale for rejection of this hypothesis is the lack of awareness and innovative ideas in local communities. It was observed that the sites had many of the tourism unique selling propositions that have value in the eyes of tourists and outsiders. However, the local communities did not seem fully aware of the hidden values of these attractions. For example, the traditional handicrafts created by the community have only recently begun to be recognised as valuable due to the help of external experts and contemporary designs (Suzuki, 2005; Zaman, 2016).

Lastly hypotheses H3d and H3e, measuring local community involvement effect of authentic rural attributes and learning attributes, were not found to have any effect and were rejected. These results are not in line with the research arguments by (Murphy, 1985), who have discussed that rurality and rural tourism are strongly inter-related and rurality is based on the local people, their social and cultural life, and natural resources. It is the central idea in the rural tourism and in motivating tourists to visit a rural destination. In the current study case, the rejection of any positive relationship between local community involvement and positioning on authentic rural attributes shows that participation of local communities in tourism activities would be low if they are not properly trained in tourism related areas such as tour guiding, language, communication, hygiene, and safety (Tasci, Croes, & Villanueva, 2014). Tourists, who choose to visit rural areas, have the strong motivation for experiencing the authenticity of rurality such as trying their food, knowing the new culture and learning about the history. So if there were weak local inclusion and cooperation then it would lead to

a failure. Hence the local involvement in such tourism activities is essential for the success of the rural tourism in any destination. This is further supported by Ezeuduji (2015) that involving local residents in tourism events would lead to establishing unique rural tourism experience for tourists. While on the other hand it will create a balance between implementing local values and community ownership. Another study by Ezeuduji and Rid (2011) recommended that local communities involvement in organizing tourism activities will build a clear brand position, operational excellence and strong customer relations to increase tourism business viability and independence.

5.2.1.4 The Local Community's Attachment and Positioning of Rural Tourism Destination (H4)

The fourth hypothesis was concerned with the relationship between the local community's attachment and the positioning of the rural tourism destination. The study found that the results partially supported this hypothesis. The findings illustrated that the local community's attachment positively affects environmental attributes (H4a) and entertainment attributes (H4c). While the local community's attachment had no effect on social and cultural attributes (H4b), authentic rural experience (H4d), and learning attributes (H4e). The next section provides justifications to the accepted and rejected hypotheses.

Anton and Lawrence (2014) have argued that rural residents were more attached to their local place compared to their urban counterparts. Research has found that residents with a strong attachment to their culture and place are more supportive of tourism development as a way to promote their community in the region and on a global level (Williams, McDonald, Riden, &

Uysal, 1995; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Lee, 2013; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Nicholas et al., 2009; Wang & Xu, 2015). Moreover, Nursey-Bray and Rist (2009) discovered that some indigenous communities with strong attachment to their culture, protection of spiritual and biodiversity chooses to adopt tourism for the preservation of these assets.

The local community's attachment on the positioning of environmental attributes was found to be positive related (H4a). This is in line with the previous findings that the local community's attachment towards their environment is one of the main reasons that they use them for tourism purpose (Lee, 2011; Walker & Ryan, 2008; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). This shows their concerns to preserve and protect their natural resources by defining rules and regulations from not harming them. During an interview, a local resident from a research site, shared that rural communities living near the forests are strongly attached to the rainforest. Therefore, all are committed to protecting it by taking a collective step and converting it into a tourism product, to be named as Penan Peace Park.

Furthermore, hypothesis H4c was also supported and local community's attachment was found to have a positive relation with the positioning of entertainment attributes. This finding supports the fact that recreational activities are essential part of all kinds of tourism including rural destinations. On a similar note, various researchers such as (Kastenholz, Davis, & Paul, 1999; Ray et al, 2012; Yusof, Muda, Amin, & Ibrahim, 2013) have indicated that there is an increasing number of tourists who want to enjoy natural-based activities, found only in rural environments as well as to experience cultural heritage that is still preserved by the rural communities. Moreover, (Schroeder, 2004) stated that apart from economic profit, tourism is also having importance in terms of providing personal entertainment opportunities to the local

people. Some of the recreational include hunting, fishing, camping, night-time entertainment, variety of foods and jungle trekking. Community attachment and positioning on entertainment attributes is intertwined. It is truer in Malaysian context, where eastern part of Malaysia, located on the island of Borneo, is a major place to many ethnic groups. Each of these groups has their own culture and traditions, having a great potential for tourism. These communities have a strong attachment to their culture and heritage, which are exhibits in their efforts to design tourism activities that promote their culture and traditions, for example, slow food festival initiated by Kelabit community in Bario, Sarawak and apple picking festival started by local community in Ba'Kelalan, Sarawak.

Contrary to the expectations, hypothesis H4b and H4d, measuring relationship of local community attachments with positioning on social and cultural attributes and authentic rural experience, were not found to have any positive effect, and therefore were rejected. This result is not in line with Park and Yoon (2009), which state that the culture of the local community and participating in rural tourism activities are important determinants for tourists. Murphy (2013) emphasizes that the foremost features of rural tourism are generated from bottom-up community engagement to develop a destination's image, tourism products, services and crafts to implement in a tourism strategy. Without the community's support, the genuine experience of rural tourism is not possible for tourists. A study by Besculides et al., (2002) examined residents' perspective about the impact of cultural tourism, and found that residents felt more strongly towards preserving the cultural atmosphere of their destination with the help of tourism. In other words, the local community's attachment to their culture and traditions plays a major role in building a unique and successful tourism image and attractions for tourists. Rationale behind this argument is obvious from an example of a local

community of Batu Nabau, Batang Lupar, Sarawak, Malaysia. This place has a mix of community, including Iban, Malays and Chineses in majority. There is one legend behind one of the main cultural attraction in Batu Nabau. According to the local person, people come to this place to hear the story of the Batu Nabau (Rock Snake). Further he shared that local people particularly Chinese feel special attachment in it as snake has an important motif in Chinese mythology. Residents of this place want to promote and convert this place as a tourist's attraction.

Furthermore, hypothesis H4e was also not supported and there was no positive relationship between the local community's attachment and the positioning on learning attributes. The results contrasted with the findings by McIntosh (2004), who indicated that besides enjoying natural environment and rurality, some tourists are also interested in an informal learning experience with the local people, such as traditional dances, local languages, myths, local legends, and handicrafts. Importantly, It is to be highlighted that the attachment to one's own culture and traditions is also one of the main determinants in preserving the knowledge and other local resources. The justification behind this argument is development of community museum in Bario, Sarawak, Malaysia (Sweet & Kelly, 2014). The purpose behind the idea of Kelabit museum is not only to just preserving the local culture but also the representation and commodification of heritage and associated knowledge of their region for the promotion of their identity by and sharing it with other people that is visitors and tourists.

5.2.1.5 The Local Infrastructure and Positioning of Rural Tourism Destination (H5)

Our final hypothesis was that there is a positive relation between local infrastructure and the positioning of the rural tourism destination. Our results fully support this hypothesis. The findings illustrate that the local infrastructure positively affects environmental attributes (H5a), social and cultural attributes (H5b), entertainment attributes (H5c), authentic rural experience (H5d), and learning attributes (H5e). Further arguments to explain the results of the hypotheses are presented in following section.

Tourism infrastructure is one of the most needed components and essential support for utilization of other existing resources at a potential tourism destination (Jovanović & Ilić, 2016). A good infrastructure is also required to satisfy the needs of tourists and to make their stay memorable, so that they can revisit or become ambassadors to promote the destination. Zhou (2014) has indicated that tourism infrastructure, such as the accommodation capacity, health services, and transportation system, is an important part of the cognitive image held of a destination. Creating the outcomes of the overall tourism development depends how well the relationship between tourism infrastructure, tourism, and the local economy are managed (Swyngedouw, 2000). In other words, it means that all the tourism stakeholders need to take part to increase the quality of the tourism experience. This is also obvious from the fact that after reaching to a destination, local infrastructure is an important factor that contributes to make the tourist experience better and building a specific destination image. General infrastructure and services provided represent one of the most important factors of the overall tourist satisfaction.

Hence it implies that there is a positive relationship between the local infrastructure and the positioning of environmental attributes (H5a). This is in accordance with the research findings of Malik and Bhat (2015), who have emphasized the importance of creating suitable infrastructure for environmental resources, to prevent negative impacts of environmental degradation. For the local community, infrastructure is one of the main aspects in tourism activities; they wish to protect their natural resources and to plan activities as tourism products. Jusoh, Marzuki, and Shahrin (2014), also stated that infrastructure plays a vital role in supporting the preservation and promotion of historical elements of a place.

Hypotheses H5b and H5c, representing relationship of local infrastructure with social & cultural attributes and entertainment attributes, were also supported. Tourism improves the arrangement of local infrastructure to make it presentable and appropriate for the tourist and for any tourism related activities. For example, the building of homestay in rural destinations, with the required facilities as set by the government or a community center where local culture, art, and heritage are offered in the form of tourism products. Another example of relation between preserving culture, heritage, and infrastructure is the UNESCO world heritage site in, George Town, Malaysia. The site boasts infrastructure with the aim to preserve culture and heritage; there are peninsular, that still have the old streets and narrow lanes, past shrines decorated with strings of paper lanterns and fragrant shops selling Indian spices. Furthermore, Eagles and McCool (2002) have also revealed that visitor-related infrastructure serves many purposes for that destination, such as facilitating recreational uses by protecting park values, appreciation and learning opportunities for the visitors. For example, a signed trail interpreting natural history.

Lastly, hypotheses H5d and H5e represented relationship of local infrastructure with authentic rural experience and learning attributes. Due to the increasing number of tourists choosing to go to more cultural sites, the competition is also increasing between destinations to present more authentic experiences; tourists also expect different experiences from their vacations. During a rural visit, the tourist experiences the community heritage, the daily life of the host community, and the specific cultural activities such as rituals and festivals. This is also in line with the study of Jovanović and Ivana (2016) who have discussed various types of tourism infrastructure that are important for the overall image of a destination. Homestay in rural destination also provides one such benefit. According to Bhuiyan, Siwar, and Ismail (2013), homestays create an opportunity for visitors to get closer to the rural world, culture, heritage, notion of the countryside, peacefulness, and to physical and spiritual rejuvenation.

5.3 Implications

This research has a number of theoretical and practical implications, both for scholars and practitioners, especially in the domain of planning and positioning rural tourism destinations.

5.3.1 Theoretical Perspective

The tourism industry is expanding and the role of tourism in the development of local and indigenous communities is becoming more important. With an increased interest in the local communities' perspective (as producers of tourism) and tourists' perspective (as consumer of tourism), more lives become influenced by the ways in which tourism research is framed and produced. The current research has developed an empirical study in which it investigated the

local rural community's perspective on the perceived positioning of a rural tourism destination. Possibly this research is the first to explore this relationship, particularly in rural destinations. This research operationalized the community's perspective with variables such as community motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, and local infrastructure. The perceived positioning was operationalized with attributes such as environmental, social and cultural, authentic rural experience, entertainment, and learning attributes. The current research highlights the multiple factors of the community's perspective and presents a framework for the relationship between local community's perspective and tourism destination image to achieve a unique position in the tourism market.

This research contributes to the wider knowledge on rural tourism, emphasizing alternative ways of view the positioning of rural tourism destinations that are outside of research and development paradigms. The data for this research has been collected in rural destinations in Sarawak, Malaysia. Therefore, this study provides basis for further research in the mentioned domain and on a wider scale. Predominantly the tourism strategies on positioning tourism destinations are based on tourists' perspective. However, the findings of this research show that there is a need to embody the local communities' perspective into tourism strategies, to promote a unique image of a particular destination.

Our findings also emphasize the importance of the community's motivation, their readiness for the tourism activities management, attachment with the community, involvement in tourism planning and development, and the local infrastructure required for the tourism. Investigating the positioning of a rural tourism destination from the community's point of view has broadened the understanding of promoting an image of a destination based on its

key strengths, i.e., environmental, social and cultural, rural authentic experience, entertainment and learning attributes. To provide theoretical support and to explain the relationship between the community's perspective and their perceived positioning of a rural tourism destination, this research has applied three theories. Positioning concept is the main aspect of the current study that explains the positioning of a tourism product in the local community's mind on basis of a product's strengths and weaknesses, this is supported by positioning theory. In case of rural tourism, local community's perspective regarding tourism development is foremost important. Hence, the social exchange theory (SET) becomes relative in this case. SET is used to explain the relationship between communities' perspective toward tourism development with the exchange of local resources with tourists. While theory of participatory development (TPD) supported the aspects of overall community participation in tourism development and claims it to be a pre-requisite to sustainability. Collectively these theories help to define community's influences on positioning of rural tourism.

Although this study is limited in its ability to provide a definite guideline, it has inevitably and successfully developed some guidelines for scholars and tourism stakeholders on the importance of considering local community's perspective in developing strategies for a rural destination. To researcher knowledge, no previous research has examined the rural community's perspective on determining the positioning of their place as a tourist destination with the five dimensions used by us (i.e., motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment, and local infrastructure). Moreover, no studies investigating the perceived positioning of rural destinations have focused on the community's perspective, instead most of the positioning studies focused on outside-in approach, that is the tourists' demands and factors to affect their demand in positioning strategies. Too few studies explore the key potencies of a place from

the local community's point of view. Hence this study provides a detailed and in-depth study on considering local community's perspective into tourism positioning strategies, which further can be applied to any rural community. The communities are the ones who know the strength and weaknesses of their place best; as tourism attractions are based on their tangible and intangible resources. This could be used as a unique selling proposition in promoting an image of a destination. In this regard, this study provided a broad investigation of understanding local community's motivation, readiness, involvement, attachment and role of local infrastructure in the positioning of a rural destination. Thus, this research adds to the existing literature on the positioning of rural destinations from the community's perspective. The current research was conducted in rural tourism destinations in Sarawak, with the primary data being collected from the local communities who were currently living in selected research sites for more than a year. Therefore, the research provides a realistic view regarding local rural community's perspectives on perceived positioning of their place as a tourist destination.

The current research provides a conceptual foundation for the importance of considering local community's perspective on the positioning of rural tourism destinations. It has also improved the understanding of the antecedents of positioning rural tourism destinations, which has subsequently resulted in better knowledge regarding the rural community's views and concerns about tourism.

5.3.2 Practical Perspective

The findings of the current research provide several practical insights to the various stakeholders involved in the tourism business (i.e., local community, government, and tourism officials). Firstly, it is important to consider the reasons that drive local communities to support and share their natural and cultural assets with tourists. The local community's motivation is what drives them to get involved in the tourism business in the first place. The results of the current research provide substantial knowledge on this particular aspect, which should enable the government and tourism officials to understand and address key factors to improve the local community's main motivations.

There has to be an increased awareness from the local government or tourism officials regarding the communities perceived positioning of a destination, such as the natural resources. Local communities are also expected to make wiser decisions about protecting and preserving natural resources by making them tourism products. Although most communities have a strong attachment with the natural resources, they are unable to relate their local green environment/jungle protection/conservation with the global issues of environmental unsustainability. Sarawak tourism officials and government thus needs to educate the local communities on global issues of environment; specifically making the local communities realize that they have the authority to play a part in preserving their local environment.

The current research also sheds light on another important aspect, the rural community's readiness for tourism business activities and services. Readiness of the local community to provide tourism activities and services is crucial as tourism planners often risk initiating a

process without assessing a community's ability and readiness for such activities. Tourism stakeholders can help the community enhance their capabilities for successful tourism experiences. Furthermore, the government can allocate funds for the capacity building of the local community, to make them feel more confident and prepare them to face the day-to-day challenges of tourism. This is an important finding, as it was discovered that local rural communities in Sarawak do not consider themselves ready for tourism businesses. If this is not addressed it could affect the overall tourist satisfaction and finally provoke the wrong image of the destination. Because rural communities and rurality are interconnected, and if they are not ready to present the tourism products then the market is like a double-edged sword. Even if the products are unique and attractive, but it turns out not ready for the tourist, everything comes to an end, thus readiness is essential. The government could also get them ready by giving them proper training to build their capacity, checking on the services and getting their opinions, and preparing the basic information for each group working in the tourism business. Hence improving the local communities' readiness will result in effective successful and unique tourism experience, and will also help to build a unique position for the brand.

A positive outcome of this research is that the local communities consider their local infrastructure as good enough to attract and entertain tourists. Thus rural destination has the required infrastructure to attract tourists and governments do not need to spend much. However, there are a few concerns regarding the suitability of the tourist's accommodations according to the set standards (e.g., basic facilities). More attention should also be paid to the infrastructure that not only completes the tourism requirements but also fulfils the traditional

setting of a rural place. Tourism officials should plan further tourism products by involving the community and giving them authority to take their own decisions.

The results of the current research confirmed the findings of previous studies regarding the importance of the community's attachment and involvement in achieving a successful tourism development and making it sustainable. With the help of these findings, the government and tourism stakeholders can gain insights into the formation of the local community's perspective about positioning a destination based on their involvement in the tourism development and attachment with their community. All of the communities selected for this research suggested that tourism development should involve the community in every possible step and maintain the community's benefits and life style. They also believed that including more people in tourism management would provide not only economic benefits by providing job opportunities, but also make them more concerned towards their culture and people. Diverse rural communities were selected for the research study, which reveal that the specific community's characteristics are an important influence on their overall perspective towards tourism activities, and shape their attitudes. For example, communities from more cultural destinations were less motivated towards environmental concerns and were more interested in positioning attributes like social and cultural attributes, as well as authentic rural experience. In doing so, they were also more creative in designing and planning tourism products on their own. This explains the fact to be considered by the tourism planners while developing a positioning strategy for a specific destination, to support local involvement, and makes efficient use of the local resources.

In relation to the point mentioned above, it is also recommended that the local communities realize and assess their own perspective about positioning their place as a tourist destination. By understanding the value of their voice in tourism development, they can create various prospects; they can influence tourism planning and decision-making, create income opportunities, increase their own knowledge about their culture, heritage and history in order to share this with the tourist, and they can raise concerns over the sensible use of local resources. As the local communities are the major stakeholders in the management of rural tourism destination, they also need to play there in achieving a successful position of their destination. Lastly it is believed that this research highlighted the importance of relationship between local communities' perspective and their perceived positioning of rural destinations in Sarawak tourism industry.

5.4 Recommendations for Tourism Stakeholders

This study has established some of very important findings about the local community's perspectives on tourism development in their destination. Firstly, the local community holds the most responsibility for developing a successful rural tourism destination. Therefore, the most important among all criteria are considering their perspectives and to maintain a fair distribution of the benefits at the local level. Without these two aspects, a rural tourism destination cannot become successful. This is also confirmed that within any kind of development, the importance of the community has to be at the forefront, with the local people being placed at the centre of the development (Telfer, 2003). The most effective way of doing this is to adopt a bottom-up or grass roots approach in managing tourism activities in a community (Fong, 2016). By sharing responsibilities among all stakeholders, the efficiency

of the tourism development can be increased, by creating economic benefits, opportunities to initiate and control their own tourism, and advancing the sustainability of a destination.

Every community has a specific motivation to be involved in tourism development. Although, the most preferred one is economic benefit, however positioning their destination could also have a different motivation at the local level. Such as, a community would be more willing to position on the basis of learning attributes, while another community would like to give more importance to environmental attributes so that these resources could be preserved. Telfer (2003) stated the importance of recognizing the differences between communities before making any decision for them. Thus, tourism officials need to consider the community's opinion while planning for the image promotion and positioning of a destination. This will not only promote the true strengths of a destination, but will also preserve the cultural and environmental resources. Rocharungsat (2005) stated that preserving local resources are essential to sustain community uniqueness: this will result in a good image for tourism and promote cultural exchange.

The current research showed a positive relationship between the local perspective and the existing infrastructure at a destination (i.e., roads, transport, and accommodation). However, during the interviews with the local people, they shared that they do not want any more meaningless constructions to destroy nature, but rather some recreational areas like theme parks. They also suggested that cheaper transportation for the tourists would help to boost tourism at their destination. Therefore, it is advisable to plan meaningful visitor-related infrastructures.

Lastly, the readiness of the local people is one of the most important requirements for a good tourism experience. Reid, Mair, and George (2004) also emphasised that helping communities to build their abilities to understand tourist requirements and their context can enhance the sustainability of tourism and community development. Thus, there is strong need for capacity building of the local people to be more flexible when dealing with tourists from different cultures. Therefore, it is advisable for the government to allocate funds for the training awareness and preparing communities to face the day-to-day challenges coming with tourism developments. This is especially advised if the community is at an initial stage of tourism development.

5.5 Strengths and Potential Limitations

Although the current research provided some significant conclusions, the design of this study limits its ability to generalize the interpretations of the findings. However these limitations also present opportunities for future research. The limitations are discussed to create boundaries rather than to question the research findings. These are:

First, the generalization of the results is limited as due to budget constraints for the research, the study was conducted only in Sarawak, Malaysia. Consequently, all of the data was collected only from rural tourism destinations in Sarawak. In this way, the population of this study was very specific. To overcome this limitation, future studies should be extended to other communities in similar settings and backgrounds or totally different settings. As different communities may also have a different attitude regarding this matter.

Second, the current research only looked at local communities from rural destinations. It is believed that different rural aspects may influence their perspective towards tourism development and positioning of rural destinations, such as a limited population, basic infrastructure, cultural attachment and natural inherited resources. In this regard, researchers may replicate the study within an urban setting and can explore the urban communities perspectives on positioning tourism destinations and compare the results obtained from different samples. Doing it this way would be crucial for increasing the generalization of the findings.

Third, the obtained data obtained was collected in a single period of time. This makes the responses static and potentially influenced under a specific situation. Definitely, the results would be more precise if longtitudional study has been apllied to the selected communities. It would provide chance to study rural community attitude for a longer period of time. As it may reveal the more accurate reponse regarding particular aspect of rural tourism, which in turn can be helpful to understand if there is any negative attitude. Hence only conclusion on the general relationship between the variables of interest could be drawn.

Fourth, due to the time constraints the current research only developed a framework on the relationship between the local community's perspectives and the perceived positioning of a rural tourism destination. As such, based on this framework, a positioning strategy can be developed for a rural destination with same rural settings to truly understand to relationship of constructs comprised in this study.

Despite these limitations, the current research added significantly to the understanding of local community's perspective in terms of their motivation, readiness, attachment, involvement and local infrastructure, and the relationship of these factors with the perceived positioning of rural destinations, based on attributes such as environmental, social and cultural, entertainment, authentic rural experience, and learning attributes. Previous studies have shown that when tourism projects are externally implemented without including the community in the decision-making, the interest of the community decreases and tourists are less satisfied (Sirakaya, Teye & Sonmez, 2002; Rocharungsat, 2005). As such, the current research adds to the existing literature about the importance of considering internal perspectives regarding the positioning of a destination with the help of different constructs to explain this relationship.

5.6 Directions for Future Research

To address the limitations of the current research and to add more insight into our findings, the following recommendations for future research have been proposed.

First, the study explores the theoretical constructs of local community perspective on tourism, related concepts on positioning of tourism destinations and highlights the inter-relationship between community perspective and positions of rural tourism destination. The study recommends further research on the practical implications of the results, specifically focusing on the design of positioning strategies for rural tourism destinations based on the local community's perspective.

Second, the focus of the study was limited to "rural communities" and rural tourism destinations. The framework developed to analyse the community's perspective and positioning of tourism destinations is based on the unique characteristics of rural settings. Thus it is suggested to explore the implications of the results in other domains of tourism, i.e. urban tourism and urban residents and compare the results obtained from different samples. Doing it this way would be important for increasing the generalization of the current research study findings.

Third, the sample of respondents was selected only from rural tourism destinations in Sarawak. This may cause possible non- representation issues, thereby restricting the ability to generalize the research findings, as the sample was limited. Therefore, to be able to generalize the research findings about perceived positioning concept by local rural communities, more rural destinations should be studied if budget and time allows for it. Researchers may replicate the study with samples from other local and international tourism destinations in order to make possible more generalization of the findings.

Fourth, this study has been somewhat limited in its selection of observed indicators, variables, and constructs. Even if those observed indicators, variables, and constructs were selected based on the literature review and researcher's observations, other critical variables and constructs may exist to achieve further insights on the positioning of rural tourism destinations. In this research mainly quantitative methods was used, but future studies could benefit from using a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to get more local insight on tourism development and tourist attractions in a particular destination.

Last but not the least, a longitudinal study is suggested to analyze the potential time interval for the hypothesized relationships and structural model. This is due to the fact that the data were collected in a period of one month. A longitudinal study might reflect ongoing transformations of constructs that could influence the relationships between the constructs. Moreover, a longitudinal analysis of the local community's perspective about tourism development and tourism destination positioning may reveal what positioning strategies will do better in increasing a destinations competitiveness and performance.

5.7 Conclusion

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that this thesis contributed to the rural tourism positioning studies by exploring and understanding the local community's perspective. This research have used the findings to create recommends for tourism stakeholders, and contributed to both theoretical and practical perspectives. Considering the local community's perspective (i.e., motivation, readiness, attachment, involvement, and local infrastructure) is an important factor when developing a positioning strategy based on specific attributes (i.e., environmental, social and cultural, entertainment, authentic rural experience, and learning) for rural tourism destinations in Sarawak, Malaysia. Based on the empirical evidences, the results of the research also confirmed the relationship between the local community's perspectives and the perceived positioning of a rural tourism destination.

The findings of the current research have provided a number of important insights on rural tourism positioning. Considering the local community's perspective will help to promote the uniqueness of each community when implementing positioning strategies. Furthermore,

ensuring community involvement is the main requirement for a successful positioning strategy; otherwise it will lose its uniqueness that can be the unique selling propositions for a particular destination. Moreover, the focus on tourism development should be balanced with local empowerment, as they are the main stakeholders bringing about sustainability. Indeed, our results revealed that the local community's perspective is crucial for developing a unique positioning strategy of a destination. Finally, this study recommends specific opportunities for tourism officials of Sarawak to achieve a successful tourism destination according to the local community's perspective.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Definition of Key Terms

This section defines the terms used in the current research.

1. The Community's Perspective

Mollahosseini and Karbasi (2012) define *perspective* as a mix of emotions, desires, beliefs, prejudices and tendencies that are derived by previous experience. The perspective makes some sort of acceptance and readiness in person's behaviour. In the current research the community's perspective refers to a particular attitude held towards tourism by a local community.

2. Rural Communities

Rural communities are located in small settlements, and although varying in size they usually have fewer than 10,000 inhabitants (Nair et al., 2015). They are situated in areas of relatively low population density, have high levels of poverty, and are characterized by lower levels of non-farm economic activities, infrastructural development, and access to essential services. According to Aref, Redzuan, Gill, and Aref (2010), a community refers to a group of individuals living or working within the same geographic area with some shared cultures or common interests. In the current research, local community refers to indigenous rural communities, which have a great attachment to their land.

3. Rural Tourism

Rural tourism is a form of tourism that provides the opportunity for tourists to directly immerse, experience, enjoy, and learn about unique cultural, natural, and historical attractions and activities provided by the local communities in a rural areas, with cooperation from the government and businesses in order to provide socio-economic benefits without exploiting the environment (Nair et al., 2015).

4. Positioning

Positioning is the image consumers held of a brand relative to competing brands in the same product category (Ries & Trout, 1972). A positioning relates the product attributes to particular target segments and aims to keep the brand at top awareness in the consumers mind, thus keeping a good position when it comes to considerations. The main concern behind an acute need positioning is to guarantee the continued presence of the brand in the consumers' consideration set, keeping a good position in top-of-the-mind awareness (Brito & Pratas, 2015).

5. Community Motivation

Motivation is described as psychological/biological needs and wants, including integral forces that arouse, direct, and integrate a person's behavior and activity (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). In the current research community motivation refers to the local community’s motivation to initiate and maintain a tourism business.

6. Community Readiness

Community readiness assess whether the local community is ready to get involved with rural tourism, their overall knowledge about local products, attractions, and the target market, as well as their expectations of delivering quality services to their customers (Slater et al., 2005).

7. Community Involvement

Community involvement describes the extent to which residents are involved in sharing issues about their lives with their communities (Lee, 2012).

8. Community Attachment

McCool and Martin (1994) define community attachment as social engagement and participation in community activities, as this reveals the emotional bond between the individual and a specific community. In the current research attachment is defined as the individual's identity, dependence on the community, emotional attachment and feelings towards the community, and the social capital of a community.

9. Tourism Infrastructure

According to the World Bank report (2004), infrastructure is the basic public infrastructure that formed the foundation to social and economic development (Jusoh & Marzuki, 2014). Tourism infrastructure includes competing and auxiliary facilities, necessary resources, and structures for the operation of a place as a tourist destination. Any access modes, such as

roads, railway trails. or airports through which a tourism destination can be reached is part of the tourism infrastructure.

10. Tourism Stakeholders

Any persons or group who can affect and/or be affected by the tourism business within a particular market or community are considered tourism stakeholders; they have an interest in the planning process, delivery, and outcomes of the tourism business (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Sautter & Leisen, 1999).

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

94300 Kota Samarahan

Sarawak Malaysia

Dear Respondent,

The present study is my PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) project at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. Title of the research study is "Rural Tourism Destination Positioning. Based On Analysis Of Community Perspective".

Main objective of this study is to explore community's attitude and views about rural tourism and its positioning in Malaysia. Please complete the questionnaire based on your honest opinion. The collected data results will be helpful to the local community to express their concerns and motivation towards tourism developments. Moreover it will also help tourism board and government for future planning and development for rural tourism.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me. Your responses are the utmost importance to us in this research study.

Yours sincerely,

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PhD candidate

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Tel: 0168687467

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Perspektif Komuniti dalam Pemilihan Tempat Destinasi Pelancongan di Luar Bandar

Maklumat Demografi	
Umar	
16-20	41-50
21-30	51-60
31-40	60+
Jantina	
Lelaki	Perempuan
Status Perkahwinan	
Berkahwin	Bujang
Bangsa	
Kelabit	Cina
Penan	Melayu
Bedayuh	India
Iban	Lain-lain_____
Taraf Pendidikan	
Sekolah Rendah	Sekolah Menegah
Universiti	Lain-lain
Diploma/STPM	
Pekerjaan	
Pekerja Kerajaan	Petani
Pekerja Swasta	Dalam Perniagaan Pelancongan
Ahli Penjagaan	Pelajar
Bersara	Lain-lain
Pendaptan Bulanan	
Tiada Pendapatan	Antara RM1,501 to RM3,000
Kurang dari RM500	Antara RM3,001 to RM 4,500
Antara RM501 to RM 1,500	Lebih dari RM4,501

Seksyen B

Sejauh manakah anda bersetuju dengan gambaran yang tepat mengenai perspektif anda terhadap pelancongan di kampung anda											
	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree										
8.	Saya bermotivasi untuk mempromosi kampung saya sebagai destinasi bagi para pelancong untuk beristirehat.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9.	Saya bermotivasi untuk mempromosi kampung saya sebagai destinasi bagi para pelancong untuk bersosial.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	Saya bermotivasi untuk mempromosi kampung saya sebagai destinasi bagi para pelancong untuk belajar.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11.	Saya bermotivasi untuk mempromosi kampung saya sebagai destinasi bagi para pelancong untuk bersama-sama keluarga.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	Saya bermotivasi untuk mempromosi kampung saya sebagai destinasi bagi para pelancong untuk mengalami sesuatu yang baru dan ruang untuk bersendirian.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13.	Saya bermotivasi untuk mempromosi kampung saya sebagai destinasi bagi para pelancong untuk berseronok.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14.	Komuniti saya bersedia untuk menghadapi cabaran yang datang melalui pembangunan pelancongan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15.	Komuniti saya mempunyai potensi untuk membawa dan merancang aktiviti pelancongan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16.	Komuniti saya bersedia untuk menerima aktiviti pelancongan sebagai suatu peluang untuk menjana pendapatan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17.	Komuniti saya bersedia untuk ambil bahagian dalam mana-mana pembangunan pelancongan yang diperlukan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18.	Komuniti saya bersedia untuk mengalami keadaan pelancongan yang tidak stabil.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19.	Komuniti saya bersedia untuk menghadiri perbincangan untuk berbincang isu-isu pelancongan yang penting.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20.	Komuniti saya bersedia untuk membantu dalam apa-apa acara pelancongan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21.	Saya mengambil bahagian dalam aktiviti berkaitan pelancongan yang mampan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22.	Saya menyokong penyelidikan kemampanan untuk komuniti saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23.	Saya menggalakkan penduduk dalam komuniti saya untuk melabur dalam pembangunan pelancongan yang mampan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24.	Saya terlibat dalam perancangan dan pengurusan untuk mengekalkan kemampanan dalam sektor perlancongan untuk komuniti saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25.	Saya terlibat dalam membuat keputusan untuk pelancongan yang mampan dalam komuniti saya.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26.	Tetapan dan kemudahan yang disediakan oleh kampung saya ini adalah yang terbaik	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27.	Saya menikmati kehidupan dalam komuniti kampung saya berbanding komuniti lain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28.	Saya merasa sangat dekat dengan komuniti saya	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29.	Kebanyakan kawan/keluarga saya lebih suka komuniti ini berbanding komuniti yang lain	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30.	Kawan/Keluarga saya akan berasa kecewa jika saya tinggal dengan komuniti yang berlainan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31.	Kampung saya mempunyai kemudahan tempat penginapan yang berkualiti baik	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32.	Kampung saya mempunyai banyak kemudahan di tempat penginapan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33.	Tempat penginapan di kampung saya mempunyai permandangan yg	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	menarik.							
34.	Kampung saya mempunyai bimbingan dan informasi untuk panduan para pelancong	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35.	Kampung saya mempunyai papan tanda jalan untuk para pelancong	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36.	Kampung saya mempunyai pakej perlancongan yang disediakan untuk para pelancong	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37.	Kampung saya mempunyai pengangkutan tempatan yang cekap dan berkualiti.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38.	Kampung saya mempunyai pelbagai servis makanan yang bekualiti.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Seksyen C

Sejauh manakah anda bersetuju dengan gambaran yang tepat terhadap kampung anda sebagai destinasi pelancongan yang mempunyai ***ciri-ciri persekitaran yang menarik.***									
Sangat tidak bersetuju 1 2 3 4 5 **Sangat bersetuju**									
39.	Persekitaran semulajadi	1	2	3	4	5			
40.	Taman negara dan hutan hidupan liar	1	2	3	4	5			
41.	Pengalaman dan gaya hidup yang sihat	1	2	3	4	5			
42.	Landskap luar bandar	1	2	3	4	5			

Sejauh manakah anda bersetuju dengan gambaran yang tepat terhadap kampung anda sebagai destinasi pelancongan yang mempunyai ***ciri-ciri sosio-budaya yang menarik.***									
Sangat tidak bersetuju 1 2 3 4 5 **Sangat bersetuju**									
43.	Seni bina dan tugu bersejarah	1	2	3	4	5			
44.	Budaya dan acara tradisi	1	2	3	4	5			
45.	Acara sosial	1	2	3	4	5			
46.	Peluang meluangkan masa untuk keluarga yang mempunyai anak	1	2	3	4	5			
47.	Permainan dan sukan tradisi	1	2	3	4	5			

Sejauh manakah anda bersetuju dengan gambaran yang tepat terhadap kampung anda sebagai destinasi pelancongan yang mempunyai ***ciri-ciri hiburan yang menarik.***									
Sangat tidak bersetuju 1 2 3 4 5 **Sangat bersetuju**									
48.	Aktiviti rekreasi luar	1	2	3	4	5			
49.	Aktiviti rekreasi yang tertutup	1	2	3	4	5			
50.	Mempunyai pelbagai jenis aktiviti rekreasi	1	2	3	4	5			
51.	Mempunyai pelbagai jenis aktiviti hiburan	1	2	3	4	5			

Sejauh manakah anda bersetuju dengan gambaran yang tepat terhadap kampung anda sebagai destinasi pelancongan yang mempunyai ***ciri-ciri pengalaman luar bandar yang asli***									
Sangat tidak bersetuju 1 2 3 4 5 **Sangat bersetuju**									
52.	Hasil ladang luar bandar (pertanian)	1	2	3	4	5			
53.	Suasana luar bandar yang menarik	1	2	3	4	5			

54.	Menginap dengan penduduk luar bandar	1	2	3	4	5
55.	Makanan tradisi yang tulen	1	2	3	4	5
56.	Cara hidup luar bandar yang tulen	1	2	3	4	5

Sejauh manakah anda bersetuju dengan gambaran yang tepat terhadap kampung anda sebagai destinasi pelancongan yang mempunyai ***ciri-ciri pembelajaran.***						
Sangat tidak bersetuju 1 2 3 4 5 **Sangat bersetuju**						
57.	Bahasa tempatan	1	2	3	4	5
58.	Tarian tradisional	1	2	3	4	5
59.	Mitos dan lagenda	1	2	3	4	5
60.	Kraf tangan tempatan	1	2	3	4	5
61.	Gaya hidup yang berlainan dan baru	1	2	3	4	5
62.	Resipi makanan tradisi	1	2	3	4	5
63.	Ilmu tentang tempat-tempat bersejarah	1	2	3	4	5

Community's Perspective in Positioning Rural Tourism Destination

Demographic Background	
Age	
16-20	41-50
21-30	51-60
31-40	60+
Gender	
Male	Female
Marital Status	
Married	Single
Race	
Kelabit	Chinese
Penan	Malay
Bedayuh	Indians
Iban	Others_____
Level of Education	
Primary	University
Secondary school	Others_____
Diploma/STPM	
Occupation	
Govt. employed	Farmer
Private sector employed	In tourism business
Businessman/woman	Student
Retired	Others_____
Monthly Income	
No income	Between RM1,501 to RM3,000
Less than RM500	Between RM3,001 to RM 4,500
Between RM501 to RM 1,500	Above RM4,501

Section B

To what extent you agree on following to best describe your perspective on tourism in your village.														
	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly agree													
8.	I am motivated to promote my village as a destination for tourist's relaxation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
9.	I am motivated to promote my village as a destination for tourist's socialization	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
10.	I am motivated to promote my village as a destination for tourist's learning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
11.	I am motivated to promote my village as a destination for family togetherness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
12.	I am motivated to promote my village as a destination for tourists to enjoy alone time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
13.	I am motivated to promote my village as a destination for tourist's excitement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
14.	My community is ready to face the challenges coming with tourism developments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
15.	My community is ready to lead and plan tourism activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
16.	My community is ready to take tourism as an opportunity for economic earning	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
17.	My community is ready to take part in any tourism development that may needed	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
18.	My community is ready to deal with unstable tourism conditions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
19.	My community is ready to attend meetings to discuss important tourism issues	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
20.	My community is ready to help in any tourism event	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
21.	I participate in sustainable tourism-related activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
22.	I support research for the sustainability of my community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
23.	I encourage my community to invest in the development of sustainable tourism	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
24.	I am involved in the planning and management of sustainable tourism in my community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
25.	I am involved in the decision-making for sustainable tourism in my community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
26.	The settings and facilities provided by my village are the best	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
27.	I enjoy living in my community over other communities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
28.	I am very attached to my community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
29.	Many of my friends/family prefer this community over other communities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
30.	My friends/family would be disappointed if I were to live in another community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
31.	My village has good quality accommodation facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
32.	My village has variety of accommodation facilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
33.	My village has attractive locations of accommodation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
34.	My village has guidance and information support for tourists	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
35.	My village has tourist signposting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
36.	My village has tourism packages for tourists	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
37.	My village has efficient and quality local transport	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						
38.	My village has variety and quality of food services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7						

Section C

*To what extent you agree on following attributes to best describe your village as an **environmentally attractive** tourist destination*										
	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree									
39.	Natural environment	1	2	3	4	5				
40.	Wildlife forests and national parks	1	2	3	4	5				
41.	Healthy lifestyle and rural experience	1	2	3	4	5				
42.	Rural landscape	1	2	3	4	5				

*To what extent you agree on following attributes to best describe your village as a **socially and culturally attractive** tourist destination*										
	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree									
43.	Historical architecture and monuments	1	2	3	4	5				
44.	Culture and folklore events	1	2	3	4	5				
45.	Social events	1	2	3	4	5				
46.	Opportunities of socializing for families with children	1	2	3	4	5				
47.	Traditional games and sports	1	2	3	4	5				

*To what extent you agree on following **entertainment attributes** to best describe your village as an attractive tourist destination*										
	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree									
48.	Outdoor recreational activities	1	2	3	4	5				
49.	Indoor recreational activities	1	2	3	4	5				
50.	Wide variety of recreational opportunities	1	2	3	4	5				
51.	Wide variety of entertainment	1	2	3	4	5				

*To what extent you agree on following **authentic rural experience** attributes to best describe your village as an attractive tourist destination*										
	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree									
52.	Rural farm products (agriculture)	1	2	3	4	5				
53.	Interesting rural experiences	1	2	3	4	5				
54.	Staying with rural community	1	2	3	4	5				
55.	Authentic rural dishes/foods	1	2	3	4	5				
56.	Authentic rural way of life	1	2	3	4	5				

*To what extent you agree on following **learning** attributes to best describe your village as an attractive tourist destination*										
	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree									
57.	Local languages	1	2	3	4	5				
58.	Traditional dances	1	2	3	4	5				
59.	Myths and legends	1	2	3	4	5				
60.	Local handicrafts	1	2	3	4	5				
61.	New and different lifestyles	1	2	3	4	5				
62.	Traditional food recipes	1	2	3	4	5				
63.	Knowledge of historical places	1	2	3	4	5				

Appendix C: SPSS Output

Statistics

		Age	Gender	Marital_Status	Race	Education	Occupation	Monthly_Income
N	Valid	588	588	588	588	588	588	588
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.4014	1.5408	1.4813	4.4371	2.3861	4.6207	3.2568
Median		3.0000	2.0000	1.0000	4.0000	2.0000	5.0000	3.0000
Std. Deviation		1.31385	.49876	.50347	1.33660	.96741	2.54581	.93048
Variance		1.726	.249	.253	1.786	.936	6.481	.866
Range		5.00	1.00	2.00	5.00	4.00	7.00	5.00
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		6.00	2.00	3.00	8.00	5.00	8.00	6.00
Sum		2000.00	906.00	871.00	2609.00	1403.00	2717.00	1915.00

Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	270	45.9	45.9	45.9
	Female	318	54.1	54.1	100.0
	Total	588	100.0	100.0	

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	16-20	30	5.1	5.1	5.1
	21-30	150	25.5	25.5	30.6
	31-40	126	21.4	21.4	52.0
	41-50	150	25.5	25.5	77.6
	51-60	100	17.0	17.0	94.6
	60 and above	32	5.4	5.4	100.0
	Total	588	100.0	100.0	

Marital Status

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Married	306	52.0	52.0	52.0
	Unmarried	281	47.8	47.8	99.8
	3.00	1	.2	.2	100.0
	Total	588	100.0	100.0	

Race

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Bidayuh	208	35.4	35.4	35.4
	Iban	114	19.4	19.4	54.8
	Chinese	97	16.5	16.5	71.3
	Malay	154	26.2	26.2	97.4
	Others	15	2.6	2.6	100.0
	Total	588	100.0	100.0	

Occupation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Govt Employed	29	4.9	4.9	4.9
	Private sector Employed	187	31.8	31.8	36.7
	Businessman/woman	59	10.0	10.0	46.8
	Retired	13	2.2	2.2	49.0
	Farmer	25	4.3	4.3	53.2
	Tourism business	109	18.5	18.5	71.8
	Student	22	3.7	3.7	75.5
	Others	144	24.5	24.5	100.0
	Total	588	100.0	100.0	

Education

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	primary school	68	11.6	11.6	11.6
	secondary school	334	56.8	56.8	68.4
	Diploma	105	17.9	17.9	86.2
	University	53	9.0	9.0	95.2
	Others	28	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	588	100.0	100.0	

Monthly Income

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	no income	22	3.7	3.7	3.7
	Less than 500	53	9.0	9.0	12.8
	Between RM501 to RM1,500	338	57.5	57.5	70.2
	Between RM1,501 to RM 3,000	108	18.4	18.4	88.6
	Between RM3,001 to RM 4,500	61	10.4	10.4	99.0
	Above RM4,501	6	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	588	100.0	100.0	

Appendix D: PLS OUTPUT

Overview

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Attachment	0.898	0.925	0.713
Authentic Rural Experience	0.866	0.909	0.714
Entertainment Attributes	0.719	0.838	0.637
Environmental Attributes	0.693	0.800	0.505
Infrastructure	0.907	0.927	0.648
Involvement	0.924	0.944	0.774
Learning Attributes	0.774	0.844	0.526
Motivation	0.889	0.910	0.630
Readiness	0.907	0.936	0.786
Social & Cultural Attributes	0.759	0.837	0.572

Cross Loadings

	ARE	Attach	EA	Enter_Att	Infra	Involv	LA	Motiv	Readi	SCA
ARE_Att01	0.847	0.504	0.253	0.482	0.615	0.173	0.361	0.315	-0.368	0.162
ARE_Att02	0.940	0.397	0.201	0.407	0.528	0.052	0.273	0.089	-0.434	0.244
ARE_Att03	0.755	0.288	0.178	0.313	0.356	0.057	0.199	0.076	-0.306	0.188
ARE_Att04	0.828	0.353	0.145	0.273	0.406	0.080	0.182	0.068	-0.317	0.172
Attach01	0.370	0.816	0.398	0.268	0.253	0.323	0.122	0.461	-0.131	0.191
Attach02	0.305	0.772	0.415	0.343	0.239	0.311	0.112	0.496	-0.219	0.309
Attach03	0.473	0.953	0.487	0.384	0.366	0.432	0.193	0.618	-0.150	0.275
Attach04	0.471	0.836	0.367	0.240	0.481	0.442	0.179	0.595	-0.032	0.224
Attach05	0.342	0.835	0.371	0.308	0.245	0.368	0.111	0.509	-0.078	0.205
EA01	0.301	0.458	0.796	0.398	0.400	0.319	-0.024	0.209	-0.267	0.313
EA02	0.004	0.252	0.684	0.131	0.033	0.087	0.162	0.142	-0.069	0.184
EA03	-0.008	0.314	0.773	0.159	0.041	0.115	0.232	0.264	0.006	0.154
EA04	0.196	0.257	0.565	0.180	0.182	0.295	0.086	0.230	-0.129	0.231
Enter_Att01	0.421	0.408	0.313	0.901	0.347	-0.026	0.331	0.366	-0.396	0.388
Enter_Att03	0.347	0.186	0.136	0.835	0.181	-0.182	0.197	0.332	-0.147	0.342
Enter_Att04	0.294	0.260	0.488	0.634	0.249	0.127	0.143	0.146	-0.255	0.211
Infra01	0.562	0.449	0.278	0.284	0.862	0.372	0.181	0.202	-0.110	0.186
Infra02	0.553	0.434	0.250	0.318	0.934	0.280	0.257	0.140	-0.174	0.185

Infra03	0.391	0.377	0.369	0.221	0.855	0.461	0.243	0.115	-0.116	0.198
Infra04	0.291	0.153	0.127	0.120	0.591	0.182	0.087	0.035	-0.015	0.101
Infra06	0.270	0.055	0.144	0.259	0.711	0.019	0.277	0.007	-0.055	0.160
Infra07	0.545	0.199	0.296	0.371	0.834	0.264	0.298	0.123	-0.118	0.234
Infra08	0.548	0.366	0.193	0.219	0.800	0.283	0.214	0.204	-0.143	0.166
Involv01	0.061	0.387	0.303	-0.053	0.229	0.919	-0.198	0.208	-0.018	0.058
Involv02	0.078	0.395	0.309	0.002	0.241	0.915	-0.194	0.211	-0.050	0.054
Involv03	0.080	0.385	0.226	-0.160	0.474	0.677	-0.020	0.358	0.191	0.017
Involv04	0.081	0.430	0.348	-0.020	0.270	0.968	-0.197	0.236	-0.034	0.060
Involv05	0.212	0.381	0.254	-0.051	0.388	0.889	-0.101	0.149	-0.002	-0.027
LA01	0.159	-0.038	-0.028	0.133	0.061	-0.249	0.554	-0.025	-0.037	-0.014
LA02	0.202	0.141	0.076	0.217	0.223	-0.081	0.811	0.229	0.039	0.117
LA03	0.105	0.116	0.082	0.184	0.156	-0.071	0.719	0.220	0.098	0.093
LA06	0.358	0.263	0.213	0.312	0.361	-0.058	0.854	0.320	0.070	0.156
LA07	0.239	0.024	-0.031	0.187	0.108	-0.273	0.648	0.013	-0.022	0.030
Motiv01	-0.016	0.487	0.172	0.200	0.069	0.235	0.154	0.821	0.338	0.119
Motiv02	-0.129	0.144	-0.088	0.225	-0.085	-0.081	0.125	0.593	0.332	-0.087
Motiv03	-0.099	0.342	0.171	0.247	-0.174	0.003	0.153	0.781	0.352	0.060
Motiv04	0.214	0.482	0.232	0.330	0.096	0.186	0.310	0.796	0.286	0.116
Motiv05	0.201	0.637	0.374	0.365	0.267	0.293	0.217	0.892	0.175	0.198
Motiv06	0.281	0.631	0.254	0.332	0.243	0.279	0.145	0.847	0.061	0.212
Readi01	-0.395	-0.058	-0.158	-0.210	-0.167	-0.136	0.063	0.323	0.765	-0.144
Readi05	-0.397	-0.172	-0.218	-0.378	-0.128	0.064	0.036	0.234	0.963	-0.243
Readi06	-0.374	-0.148	-0.167	-0.332	-0.110	0.043	0.047	0.231	0.912	-0.175
Readi07	-0.351	-0.126	-0.188	-0.283	-0.095	0.020	0.039	0.178	0.894	-0.217
SCA01	0.210	0.305	0.281	0.359	0.287	0.089	0.024	0.183	-0.161	0.881
SCA02	0.127	0.083	0.249	0.223	-0.022	-0.052	0.184	0.056	-0.194	0.562
SCA03	0.193	0.286	0.249	0.319	0.265	0.079	0.028	0.165	-0.156	0.889
SCA05	0.138	0.107	0.280	0.332	-0.001	-0.076	0.263	0.083	-0.212	0.636

Discriminant Validity

	Attachment	Authentic Rural Experience	Entertainment Attributes	Environmental Attributes	Infrastructure	Involvement	Learning Attributes	Motivation	Readiness	Social & Cultural Attributes
Attachment	0.845									
Authentic Rural Experience	0.468	0.845								
Entertainment Attributes	0.369	0.449	0.798							
Environmental Attributes	0.485	0.235	0.356	0.710						
Infrastructure	0.379	0.581	0.330	0.305	0.805					
Involvement	0.447	0.113	-0.054	0.331	0.344	0.880				
Learning Attributes	0.173	0.312	0.300	0.115	0.283	-0.172	0.725			
Motivation	0.638	0.177	0.374	0.299	0.159	0.253	0.245	0.794		
Readiness	-0.146	-0.427	-0.345	-0.208	-0.140	0.005	0.051	0.269	0.886	
Social & Cultural Attributes	0.287	0.226	0.407	0.338	0.224	0.040	0.123	0.176	-0.222	0.756

Outer Model t-Statistics

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
ARE_Att01 <- Authentic Rural Experience	0.847	0.847	0.010	86.661	0.000
ARE_Att02 <- Authentic Rural Experience	0.940	0.940	0.005	178.898	0.000
ARE_Att03 <- Authentic Rural Experience	0.755	0.755	0.034	22.377	0.000
ARE_Att04 <- Authentic Rural Experience	0.828	0.828	0.020	41.497	0.000
Attach01 <- Attachment	0.816	0.815	0.023	35.684	0.000
Attach02 <- Attachment	0.772	0.772	0.023	34.083	0.000
Attach03 <- Attachment	0.953	0.953	0.004	255.700	0.000
Attach04 <- Attachment	0.836	0.836	0.012	67.857	0.000
Attach05 <- Attachment	0.835	0.835	0.023	35.904	0.000
EA01 <- Environmental Attributes	0.796	0.795	0.019	41.760	0.000
EA02 <- Environmental Attributes	0.684	0.685	0.050	13.594	0.000
EA03 <- Environmental Attributes	0.773	0.773	0.038	20.410	0.000
EA04 <- Environmental Attributes	0.565	0.561	0.040	14.158	0.000
Enter_Att01 <- Entertainment Attributes	0.901	0.901	0.008	114.299	0.000
Enter_Att03 <- Entertainment Attributes	0.835	0.835	0.015	54.955	0.000
Enter_Att04 <- Entertainment Attributes	0.634	0.632	0.037	17.086	0.000
Infra01 <- Infrastructure	0.862	0.862	0.012	70.524	0.000
Infra02 <- Infrastructure	0.934	0.934	0.006	165.837	0.000