

Developing Ecotourism Community Based Approach: A Sustainable Tourism Development Project on Tanjung Surat Island

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Abstract

The Tanjung Surat Island Ecotourism Development Master Plan study was commissioned to support the Johor Southeast Development Authority (KEJORA) in creating a high-impact strategy to develop Tanjung Surat Island into a premier ecotourism destination for both local and international tourists. This study addresses the prevalent community misunderstanding regarding ecotourism development. The main objective of this study is to identify strategic planning through community engagement initiatives spearheaded by KEJORA on Tanjung Surat Island. Quantitative methods, including the distribution of questionnaires to 118 respondents, were employed to meet this objective. In addition to the questionnaires, the study incorporated several other data collection methods to ensure a thorough understanding of the community's perspective. These included structured interviews with key stakeholders, focus group discussions with community leaders, and participatory observation to gather qualitative insights that complemented the quantitative data. The study's findings will provide a comprehensive guide and reference for planning across economic, social, and environmental dimensions, aiding in the development of Tanjung Surat Island's ecotourism sector. This guide will benefit KEJORA and other stakeholders, including the private sector, interested in supporting and shaping the island's ecotourism future. Additionally, the study highlights the critical need for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to enhance the quality of existing services, ensuring they meet current and future demands and standards.

1. Introduction

Ecotourism has become an important economic activity in natural areas around the world including Malaysia. Ecotourism had a very important aspect to be emphasized in social, economic, environmental, and sustainable development in the community. The ecotourism growth and sustainable environmental development has become

a matter of serious concern in tourism sector and sustainable development (Rahman, 2021). Looking from the perspective of social development, the cooperation developed will be able to create a spirit of partnership and unity in a community and able to change the image of the village community to be more open in accepting changes according to current needs. Meanwhile from an economic point of view, with the existence of ecotourism, it can stimulate the economic income of existing communities and reduce the income gap between communities. For the long term, the environment at this ecotourism location can be preserved and the ecosystem restored in line with the requirements in the National Ecotourism Plan (2016-2025). Through the plan, which is based on five main focuses, namely: 1) appreciating nature; 2) contributing to conservation; 3) benefiting the local community; 4) educational components; and 5) awareness and sustainability - ecologically, economically, socio-culturally and ethically. This focus gives the impression that Malaysia is very committed to maintaining and developing areas that have potential as ecotourism that will be able to attract tourists from the local and international. The tourism sector is often referred to as the 'engine of national economic growth' or more synonymously is the 'heart of the national economy' (Minnaert, 2012). Hence, the ecotourism not only preserved conservation but at the same time generates income and economic benefits for communities living in the rural areas. More important, ecotourism not only trigger positive economic change in rural communities but can also lead to new restrictions on time, decreases reciprocity and social conflict.

The Malaysian government is very much committed to the concept of sustainable development in the tourism industry through ministry, state government or related agencies. The government come out with policies related to tourism to encourage tourism and the regulation and laws that support the tourism industry. Tourism policy is required as the objective for economic development. Among other, the National Ecotourism Plan (2016-2025) and the Ecotourism Development Plan Reporting Book in Tanjung Surat Island, Kota Tinggi which has been developed by the Southeast Johor Development Authority (KEJORA) are one of the policies to support tourism industry. KEJORA is the agency responsible for drawing up an action plan in the southern region and has prepared as many as six proposed strategies that have been proposed by researchers involving development from the point of view of infrastructure and utilities, namely: 1) Creating green infrastructure that is sustainable and environmentally friendly; 2) Integrated short-term and long-term planning; 3) Provision of public facilities according to the needs of the community and visitors; 4) Optimizing energy resources other than elective electives such as the use of solar energy; 5) Create a digital application system for the purpose of promotion and information sharing; and 6) Effective, quality and integrated public transport. Ecotourism gives the opportunities to local and international tourist to learn more environmentally conscious lives by interact with the natural world. Unfortunately, the local especially youth hesitate to be involved in ecotourism and be part of the ecotourism communities' projects in Tanjung Surat Island. The Community Based Ecotourism is tourism that is manage by the community for the tourist destination (Khanal & Babar, 2007). The lack of involvement from the youth may be due to several factors, such as lack of awareness of the opportunities available, lack of training and skills required in the tourism sector, as well as lack of support from the authorities to encourage youth involvement. Lack of awareness training has been evident in the performance of many organizations and communities (Khalid, Eldakak, & Puteh, 2017). As a result, the potential of a creative and energetic young workforce is not fully utilized in the local tourism industry, which can hinder development and innovation in the sector. The tourism packages offered on Tanjung Surat Island are currently not comprehensive and do not involve elements of local cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is one of the main attractions in ecotourism, which can add value to the tourist experience. Without these elements, tour packages may be less attractive to tourists looking for an authentic and different experience. In addition, the lack of heritage elements in tourism packages may cause tourists to lack understanding and appreciation of local culture and history. Differences in local culture can influence consumer behaviour in entrepreneurial settings (Lokman et al., 2012).

The lack of activities or services at Tanjung Surat Island especially during nighttime can reduce the attractiveness of this destination to tourists. An attractive tourist destination is not only relying on its natural resources, but also on its available infrastructure, facilities, and activities provided by the tourist operators (Abdullah, Razak, & Jaafar, 2014). Night activities such as night markets, cultural performances, and various entertainment can add to the attraction and provide a more complete experience to tourists. Without night activities, tourists may feel bored and choose not to spend the night on the island, which may affect the income of the local tourism sector. The absence of a dedicated site for business activities on Tanjung Surat Island makes it difficult for local traders to run their business effectively. A well-organized business site can help regulate the flow of tourists, make it easier for tourists to find and buy local products or services, and boost the local economy. Without these specific sites, business activities may be disorganized and less efficient, which can reduce the experience of tourists and the income of local merchants. Overall, to address these issues the existing community leadership needs to strengthen collaborative relationships between local authorities, communities, and the private sector to increase youth involvement, enrich tourism packages with heritage elements, provide more night activities, and organize business sites with better. Today's leaders face challenges within the evolving and unpredictable environments of organizations and communities (Harthy, Puteh, & Harthy, 2019). With this, Tanjung Surat Island can develop as an attractive and competitive ecotourism destination. In particular, it has

been extensively recognized that the community-based tourism can improve the communities' economic status and uplift the economic benefits in marginalized communities (Khalid et al., 2019).

This paper aims to Identify current economic activities and issues faced by the residents of Tanjung Surat Island and to Identify the strength of human resources that can be used for ecotourism purposes. This paper also highlights the importance and impact of various approaches to vocational education and training, particularly in the context of TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training), to community development and the national economy. Anafi and Noor (2020) examine the development of TVET under the Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), emphasizing that TVET is key in producing highly skilled human capital that is important for economic development. Palal et al. (2020) also studied the effectiveness of the andragogic approach in a rural training course, showing the importance of an appropriate approach for adult participants. The role of TVET extends beyond education and training, encompassing a focus on entrepreneurship in community colleges to empower women entrepreneurs. This approach emphasizes the importance of skills development and lifelong education, enabling women to succeed in various entrepreneurial endeavors (Hassan et al., 2020). Additionally, women entrepreneurs significantly contribute to the success of an economy in various nations of the world including Malaysia (Zainuddin et al., 2017). Finally, Nong & Osman (2024) discusses the importance of 21st century soft skills to ensure the readiness of TVET students for future careers, which is important to meet the demands of a job market that is increasingly influenced by digitization and technology. Readiness refers to the organization's and individuals' ability to adapt to change, encompassing the people, processes, and technology aspects of the organization (Hussein, Mahrin, Maarop, & Bakar, 2019). All these studies underline that increased skills and vocational education are critical for competitive economic development and better social well-being.

2. Integrating Ecotourism, Community Engagement and TVET in the Tourism Industry

There are many studies (Khalis, et al., 2019; Rahman et al., 2021; Scheyvens, 1999) underscore the pivotal role of ecotourism in empowering local communities and bolstering economies. For example, Mulia and Narwan (2020) demonstrated that ecotourism initiatives in Kadamaian, Kota Belud significantly contribute to gender equality by enhancing women's roles in economic, social, and political spheres. However, ecotourism in developing countries presents a double-edged sword; while it can empower local populations, particularly women, it can also inadvertently marginalize them. Therefore, careful planning and inclusive strategies are crucial for guiding future development efforts. Further studies have identified specific regions with untapped ecotourism potential. For instance, Nur Fadzila Mohd Hamami and Indera Syahrul Mat (2023) highlighted that Pekan Parit Sulong, despite its modest commercial profile, offers substantial opportunities for ecotourism. Similarly, research by Mahadzir, Aminludin, and Ayub (2020) emphasized the critical role of local community involvement in Rembau, particularly through nature-based tourism activities. Moreover, Rashid, Rahman, and Rashid (2023) examined firefly ecotourism in Peninsular Malaysia, illustrating its economic and social benefits for local communities while stressing the importance of environmental sustainability for the sector's long-term success. Collectively, these studies provide valuable insights for developing policies and strategies that both benefit local communities and safeguard natural resources.

Numerous studies highlight the crucial importance of ecotourism and community-based tourism (CBT) in strengthening local economies and improving the quality of life for communities, particularly for local villagers and older adults. Many older adults live alone, often as a result of losing a spouse, experiencing decreased mobility, and no longer having driving privileges (Karim, Lokman, & Redzuan, 2016). These forms of tourism not only provide economic benefits through job creation and the preservation of cultural heritage but also promote sustainable practices that protect the natural environment. Furthermore, they offer opportunities for meaningful cultural exchange and education, fostering a deeper appreciation for local traditions and lifestyles. By actively involving community members in the planning and operation of tourism initiatives, these approaches empower individuals, particularly the elderly, by providing them with avenues to share their knowledge and skills, thereby fostering a sense of pride and ownership in their cultural and natural resources. Habiba and Lina (2023) noted that CBT can alleviate poverty and enhance community living standards by ensuring financial benefits remain within the local economy. While, Azwar et al. (2023) underscored the importance of the CBT development strategy through the Penta-Helix model, which involves collaboration among academia, business, government, media, and society to empower local wisdom and achieve tourism sustainability. Collectively, these studies highlight the necessity of collaboration and community empowerment for the success of community-based tourism initiatives.

Hassan et al. (2020) discussed the role of TVET and entrepreneurship in community colleges, focusing on empowering women entrepreneurs. This is aligned with the goals of CBT, which often seeks to involve all community members, including women, in tourism activities to ensure inclusive economic growth. TVET programs can thus provide the necessary training and support to foster entrepreneurship within the tourism sector. Osman (2024) stressed the importance of 21st-century soft skills to ensure TVET students are prepared for future careers, particularly in sectors influenced by digitization and technology. These skills are crucial for enhancing the quality of services in ecotourism and CBT, ensuring that communities can effectively manage and

market their tourism offerings in a competitive global market. Ultimately, integrating TVET into the development strategies of ecotourism and CBT can significantly enhance their effectiveness. By providing targeted education and training, TVET programs can equip community members with the skills needed to sustainably manage and benefit from tourism activities. This approach not only supports economic development but also contributes to the overall well-being and empowerment of local communities. This aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which assert that most SDG projects have significantly impacted the social, economic, and environmental well-being of Malaysian communities, particularly those from B40 families (Mohd Salleh et al., 2023).

Recent studies emphasize the pivotal role of various approaches to skills and competent workers, especially within the framework of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), in fostering community development and boosting national economies. Competency is a vital element for assessing the quality of TVET workers (Lai, Hamisu & Salleh, 2019). Anafi and Noor (2020) explored the progression of TVET under the Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), underscoring TVET's critical role in cultivating highly skilled human capital essential for economic growth. Palal et al. (2020) investigated the efficacy of andragogic methods in rural training programs, highlighting the significance of tailored approaches for adult learners. Hassan et al. (2020) examined the intersection of TVET and entrepreneurship within community colleges, emphasizing the empowerment of women entrepreneurs through skill development and lifelong learning. Osman (2024) highlighted the necessity of 21st-century soft skills to prepare TVET students for future careers, aligning with the demands of an increasingly digital and technologically driven job market. These findings collectively underscore the importance of enhancing vocational skills and education to drive competitive economic development and improve social well-being.

3. Methodology

This research employs a quantitative research approach using a descriptive design to gain a comprehensive understanding of the situation or event under study. The primary objective of utilizing a quantitative methodology is to quantify and analyze variables systematically, thereby obtaining precise and reliable results. During the research design, methods planning, and results writing stages, it is important for the researcher to consider reliability and validity, especially in quantitative research to get reliable findings (Salleh, Sulaiman, & Gloeckner, 2023). Descriptive statistical analyses, including mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage, are employed to interpret the data effectively. Data collection methods encompass a variety of techniques such as surveys, field studies, document analysis, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), with a particular emphasis on surveys for collecting primary data. In addition to the questionnaires, the study utilized several other data collection methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the community's perspective. These methods included structured interviews with key stakeholders, focus group discussions with community leaders, and participatory observation. These qualitative approaches were designed to complement the quantitative data, providing a richer, more nuanced understanding of community attitudes, perceptions, and expectations towards ecotourism development.

The study was conducted on Tanjung Surat Island, located in the Kota Tinggi district of Johor, Malaysia. Tanjung Surat Island is recognized as a significant tourist destination within the state of Johor, situated near the Johor River (Sungai Johor) and approximately 32 kilometers from Johor Bahru, the state capital. The study population comprises 167 residents of Kampung Tanjung Surat, as detailed in Table 1. Recent studies have underscored the importance of employing robust quantitative methods in tourism research to ensure the accuracy and validity of findings. For instance, Smith et al. (2023) highlighted the effectiveness of using descriptive statistical techniques in tourism studies to provide clear and actionable insights. Additionally, Lee and Wang (2022) emphasized the value of comprehensive data collection methods, including surveys and FGDs, in capturing diverse perspectives and enhancing the overall quality of the research. These recent citations reinforce the methodological choices made in this study, ensuring that the research is grounded in contemporary best practices.

Table 1 Demographics of Kampung Tanjung Surat

TANJUNG SURAT ISLAND PROFILE	
Land area	9.2 km ² (925 Hectares)
Village	Kampung Nyior Kampung Linting Kampung Tanjung Surat Kampung Belungkor
Population	167 residents

Economy / Source of Income	Fisherman Agriculture Tourism
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The use of an appropriate sampling technique is crucial in this research to ensure the representativeness of the findings. The sample size was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, which is widely recognized for its reliability in sample size determination. Consequently, the suitable sample size for this study was calculated to be 118 individuals. The sampling method employed was simple random sampling, ensuring that every resident had an equal chance of being selected. The list of residents was obtained from KEJORA (Southeast Johor Development Authority) and organized in numerical order using Microsoft Excel to facilitate random selection. The questionnaire used in this study was derived from the Tanjung Surat Island Ecotourism Study in Kota Tinggi, meticulously developed by the researchers to address the specific research questions. The questionnaire was physically distributed to the selected respondents to ensure a high response rate and the accuracy of the collected data. Recent studies, such as those by Taherdoost (2016) and Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim (2016), have emphasized the importance of employing robust sampling techniques and adequately sized samples to enhance the validity and reliability of research findings. These citations underscore the methodological rigor of the current study, highlighting the careful consideration given to sample selection and data collection processes.

4. Findings and Discussion

Based on the Focus Group Discussion and survey data, the finding in Figure 1 shows that the distribution plan of the population living in four network villages, namely Kampung Belungkor, Kampung Tanjung Surat, Kampung Nyior and Kampung Linting. Figure 1 provides information about the population distribution in Pulau Tanjung Surat, Kota Tinggi, Johor, which is relevant to an ecotourism development plan for the island. There are 167 residents in Pulau Tanjung Surat based on a census conducted on January 13, 2023, and confirmed in a Focus Group Discussion on January 25, 2023. The majority of the population are Malay with 165 people and only 2 people being Chinese. The population is predominantly male, with men making up 53% (about 88 people) and women making up 47% (about 79 people). A pie chart indicates the percentage distribution of the population across the different villages consist of Kampung Tanjung Surat (30%), Kampung Nyior (22%), Kampung Linting (18%) and Kampung Belungkor (30%). Figure 1 also presents the age distribution of the population across different age groups including 0-14 years (30 individuals), 15-29 years (38 individuals), 30-44 years (43 individuals), 45-59 years (32 individuals), and 60 years and above (24 individuals). The table also includes information on education and employment status, with categories such as students, working individuals, and retirees.

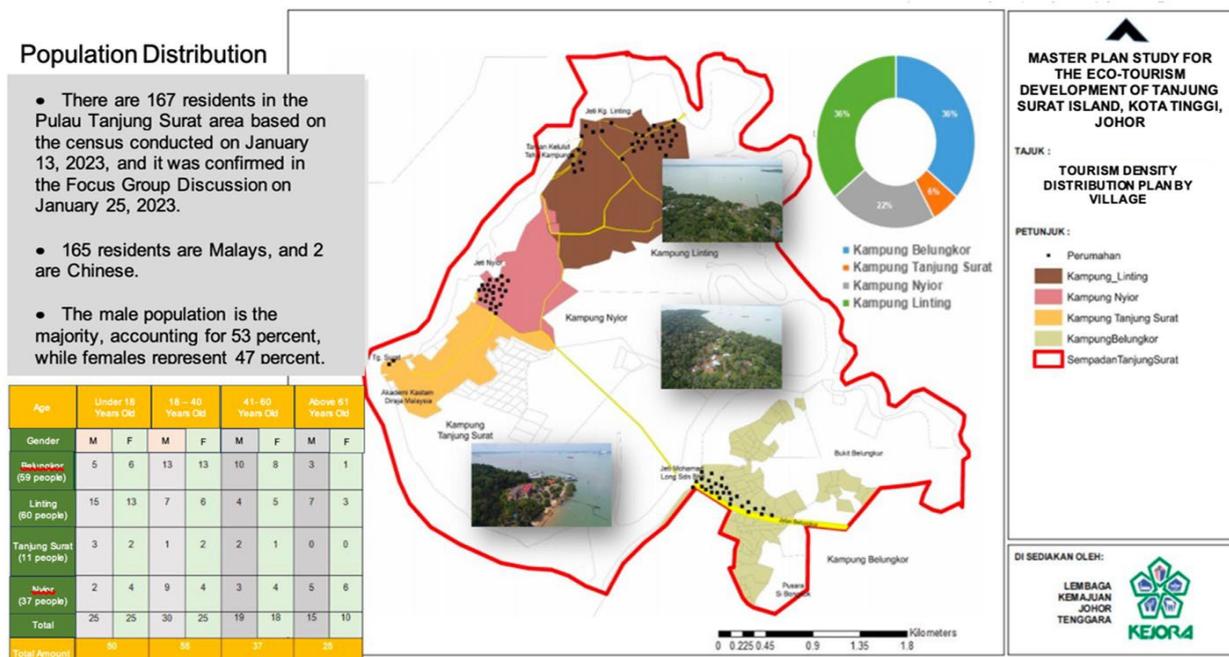


Fig. 1 Kampung Tanjung Surat Focus Group census summary (adapted from the eco tourism study report book of Tanjung Surat Island, Kota Tinggi, Johor)

Figure 2 provides a detailed profile of the population in Pulau Tanjung Surat, Kota Tinggi, Johor, with a focus on education levels and skill composition, which are crucial for developing ecotourism. Pie Chart breakdown of the key elements including 62% have completed secondary education (SPM), 31% have not completed formal education, and 7% hold a bachelor's degree (Ijazah Sarjana Muda). Additionally, 66% of residents in Kampung Belungkor have formal education, 93% of the working-age population (18-60 years) have formal education, 7% of the working-age population hold a bachelor's degree, and 65% of the working-age population do not have formal education. Working-Age Population consist of 97% of the population is within the working age range (18-60 years). The distribution across villages is Kampung Belungkor (44 people), Kampung Linting (22 people), Kampung Nyior (6 people), and Kampung Tanjung Surat (20 people). In terms of skills composition, the bar chart shows the distribution of various skills among the population, important for developing ecotourism activities such as Cooking Skills (32%), Handicraft Skills (20%), Fishing Skills (14%), Tourism Skills (17%), Teaching Skills (6%), Farming Skills (4%), Sewing Skills (4%), Beekeeping Skills (1%), and Construction Skills (2%).

Overall, Figure 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the educational background and skills of the population in Pulau Tanjung Surat, highlighting key factors critical for the planning and development of ecotourism projects. Understanding the community's level of education and specific skill sets allows for the creation of ecotourism initiatives that effectively utilize local talent, thereby promoting sustainable and inclusive development. The data reveals a high percentage of individuals with secondary education, alongside specialized skills in cooking, handicrafts, and tourism-related activities. This suggests potential avenues for developing ecotourism ventures that can directly benefit the local community by providing employment opportunities and fostering economic growth. Furthermore, the presence of a significant number of people in the productive age group underscores the community's capacity to actively participate in and contribute to the region's economic and tourism sectors. This demographic advantage can be leveraged to enhance the overall quality of ecotourism services offered, making Pulau Tanjung Surat an attractive destination for eco-conscious travelers. By aligning the community's educational and skill profiles with targeted ecotourism projects, stakeholders can ensure a holistic approach that supports both economic development and environmental conservation.

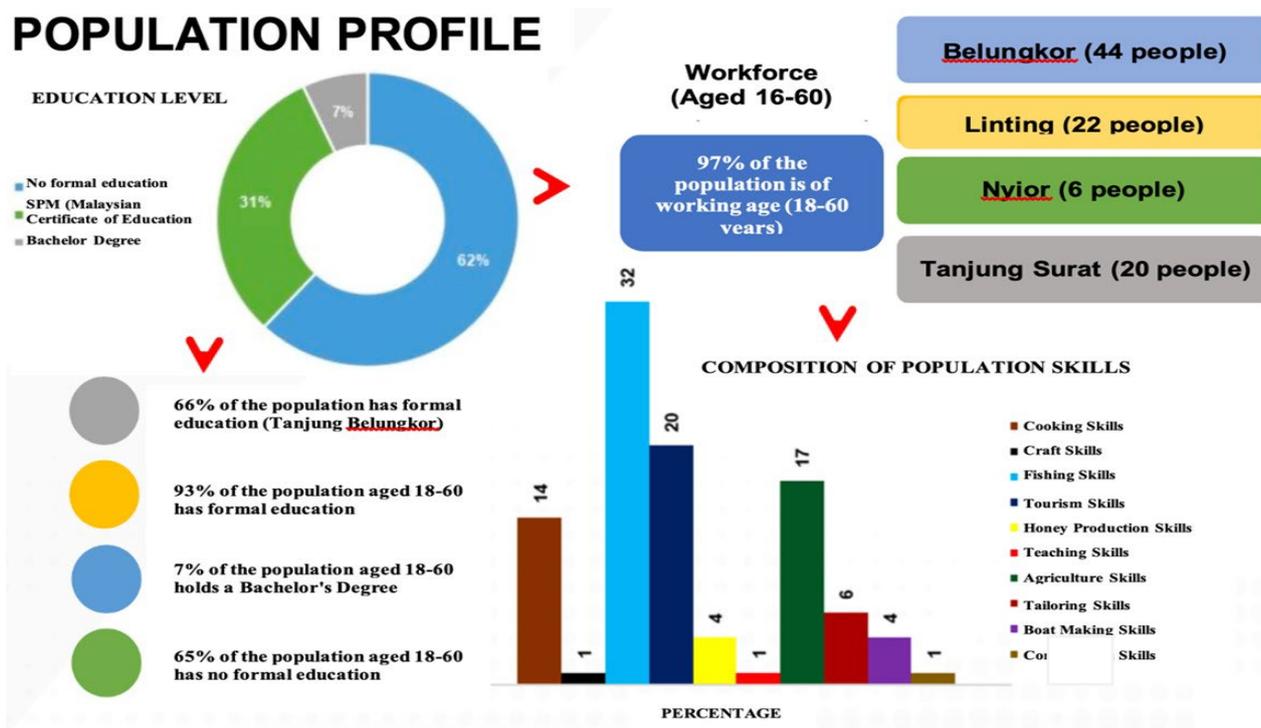


Fig. 2 Population profile based on education level and skill composition (Adapted from the eco tourism study report book of Tanjung Surat Island, Kota Tinggi, Johor)

The skill composition of the population is diverse and can be utilized for the development of ecotourism. A total of 32% of residents have cooking skills, 20% have welding skills, and 17% are fishermen. In addition, 14% of the population has skills in the field of services, 7% in honey making, 4% in teaching and agriculture respectively, and 1% in sewing skills, jong making, and construction. Overall, 93% of residents aged between 18 and 60 have formal education, with 66% of Tanjung Surat residents having formal education. However, there are

still 65% of the population in this age group who do not have formal education. This shows that there is room for improvement in education and skills training to support the development of ecotourism in Tanjung Surat Island.

Based on Figure 3, some research findings have been obtained by the researchers from the perspective of the primary sector involvement which is resource extraction where as many as 55% of Tanjung Surat Island residents are involved in the resource extraction sector, such as fishing and agriculture. For the tertiary sector (services) as much as 42% of the population is involved in the service sector involving food preparation, tourist guides, and boat drivers. This service is more seen in Kampung Linting and Kampung Niyor because of the larger population compared to Kampung Tanjung Surat. From the point of view of employment period, 94% of those who have worked for less than 5 years are in the age group of 18 to 60 years. While 100% of employees within 5 to 10 years are in the age group of 18 to 60 years. 50% of those who have worked for more than 10 years are between the ages of 18 and 60. From the point of view of socioeconomic composition between the villages, the residents of Kampung Belungkor are involved in the resource extraction sector such as fishing and agriculture. While the residents of Kampung Linting and Kampung Niyor are more involved in the service sector and the residents of Kampung Tanjung Surat are more involved in the resource extraction sector.

POPULATION ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Socioeconomic Composition between Villages (People)

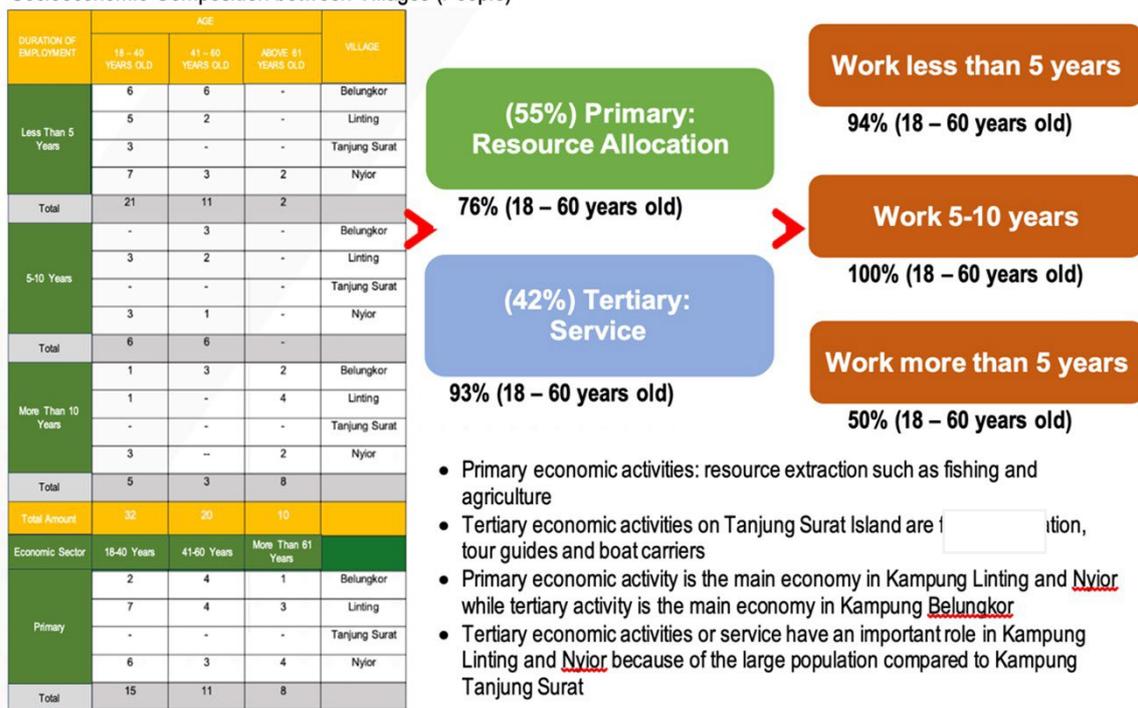


Fig. 3 Economic activities of the population (adapted from the eco tourism study report book of Tanjung Surat Island, Kota Tinggi, Johor)

This study shows that the people of Tanjung Surat Island are involved in two main economic sectors, namely resource extraction and services. Most of the population involved in these two sectors are in the productive age group (18-60 years). Economic activity in the service sector is more dominant in densely populated villages such as Kampung Linting and Kampung Niyor, while the resource extraction sector is more dominant in villages such as Kampung Tanjung Surat and Kampung Belungkor. Employment duration also shows that most residents are engaged in short- to medium-term employment, with only half of them working for more than 10 years.

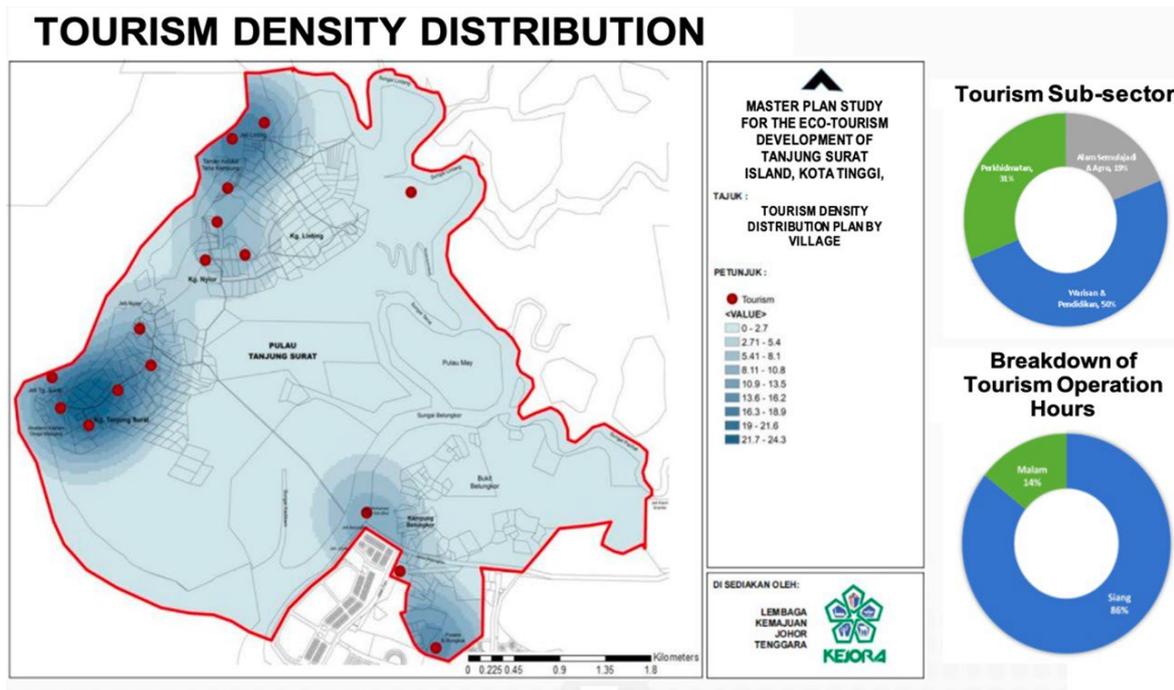


Fig. 4 Tourism density distribution (adapted from the eco tourism study report book of Tanjung Surat Island, Kota Tinggi, Johor)

The findings also discover that 93% of respondents agree to participate in ecotourism activities, while 7% of respondents did not agree because they thought the capital requirement was insufficient and the lack of information about ecotourism planning in Tanjung Surat Island. In addition, constraints in terms of limited movement to explore product potential due to geographical challenges and existing transport infrastructure. Based on the findings obtained in this study, The Forgotten Jauhar Concept has been proposed to achieve the goal of socioeconomic development in Tanjung Surat Island. Here are 2 concepts that have been introduced for the development of the local community namely: 1) Community, which involvement of young workforce in the field of ecotourism. Improvement of fishing skills and local crafts (jong, cooking, entrepreneurship) through courses and promotions that are conducted periodically. The promotion and outreach strategies for any activity can be effectively executed through a website. The websites should not only prioritize usability but also focus on capturing user emotions and intentions (Bidin & Lokman, 2018). Additionally, people bought emotional products that make them feel good (Lokman et al., 2019). By doing so, they can serve as powerful promotional tools that resonate more deeply with visitors, fostering stronger connections and encouraging engagement with the brand or activity being promoted. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems can be leveraged effectively to collect, analyze, and present data in efficient and meaningful (Hamidi, Shaffie, Sarif, & Ashar, 2013). The increasing demand for ICT has led to a greater need for big data and cloud storage solutions. The growth of the big data phenomenon, coupled with the accessibility of advanced technologies, has paved the way for new innovations (Zain, Yaacob, Ibrahim, & Hussein, 2023).

This holistic approach can enhance the overall user experience and increase the effectiveness of the promotional efforts. At the end, customer interactions via websites, social media, and digital platforms can have a significant impact on the buying process (Hamidi, Ismail, Shuhidan, & Kadir, 2023). To empower the community's knowledge, TVET programs are provided for the community to improve the quality of services and sources of income for the population. This continuous training and appropriate opportunities can overcome the challenge of initial capital and increase the willingness to participate in ecotourism that has been created.; 2) Culture, cover existing cultural activities are highlighted through tourism packages for visitors through the medium of social media, cooperatives and joint ventures with the hotel industry around Desaru which is a focus area for international domestic tourists. Among the activities that have been highlighted are Jong, traditional food (spicy sour, gonggong snails, nasi lemak daun simpoh, gamat soup, jeruju tea and rumah rakit).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the tourism sector plays a crucial role in the country's economic development, serving as a primary source of foreign exchange. The sustainable development of ecotourism, which emphasizes the responsible use of natural resources as key attractions, is essential to ensure long-term viability. Tanjung Surat Island, with its abundant natural beauty and strategic location, holds significant potential for diverse tourism activities and can create numerous job opportunities for local residents. The development of this area can also promote homestay programs and other tourism services, thereby boosting the income of the community.

The Tanjung Surat Island Ecotourism Development Master Plan has outlined a high-impact strategy aimed at transforming the island into a premier ecotourism destination, aligning with both national and local tourism aspirations. This strategy leverages the island's current socioeconomic status to attract tourists eager to experience its natural charm and tranquillity. Moreover, this study serves as a valuable reference for future researchers, highlighting other critical factors that contribute to the development of ecotourism and addressing issues pertinent to the enhancement of local communities.

By focusing on sustainable practices and community empowerment, Tanjung Surat Island can become a model for ecotourism development, fostering economic growth while preserving its natural and cultural heritage. The insights gained from this research can guide future initiatives and policies, ensuring that the benefits of tourism are widely shared and contribute to the overall well-being of the region.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **study conception and design:** Norfazlinda Abdul Majid; **data management:** Ami Fariza Mat Jusoh; **writing and summarise the literature review:** Mohd Fakharur Razziy Hazran; **draft manuscript preparation:** Mohd Azrul Shari; and **revise, editor and finalise the article:** Kahirol Mohd Salleh. All authors reviewed the results and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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