THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL EMPOWERMENT AGENTS IN COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

Understanding of local empowerment concept is essential to explain the development of the Community-Based Tourism particularly from the perspective of the local community. Therefore, it is important to distinguish the local empowerment in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the methods or approaches introduced by local empowerment agents. Empowerment is a process which involves the transfer of power to something of interest to them. It is also used to understand how the community acquired the power / responsibility from the tourism development in their area. This study was designed to evaluate the methods or approaches introduced by the local empowerment agents in Community-based tourism specifically the homestay program. The evaluation of local empowerment is carried out based on two different approaches ranging from government agencies and NGOs. *Actor-Network Theory* approach is also used as a basic reference in understanding the roles and responsibilities of agencies involved in the development of the homestay program. A qualitative approach was chosen as a research strategy that will be a strong basis in acquiring more detailed information. Analyses of four main indicators were used in determining the effectiveness of the approaches introduced by two local empowerment agents' based on two different homestays. Thematic analysis was used in interpreting the data in the form of keywords and storytelling. This analysis was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the approaches introduced by the local empowerment agents based on four main indicators comprises of economic, social, psychological and political based on two different case studies. The local empowerment that had been practiced was subsequently tested. The result shows that both approaches introduced by local empowerment agent have its own strengths and benefits. The implications of this study are further detailed for the purpose of developing the homestay program in future.

Keywords: Local Empowerment, Community-based Tourism, Local Empowerment Agents, Government Agencies, NGOs

ABSTRAK

Pemahaman terhadap konsep *local empowerment* adalah penting bagi menjelaskan pembangunan *Community-Based Tourism* khususnya dalam perspektif penduduk tempatan. Oleh itu, adalah penting untuk mengetahui *local empowerment* ini untuk menilai keberkesanan kaedah dan pendekatan yang digunakan oleh *local empowerment agents. Local empowerment* merupakan suatu proses di mana ia melibatkan pemindahan kuasa terhadap sesuatu yang mempunyai kepentingan kepada mereka. Ia juga digunakan untuk memahami bagaimana sesuatu komuniti itu memperoleh kuasa/tanggungjawab terhadap pembangunan pelancongan di kawasan mereka. Kajian ini dibentuk bagi menilai kaedah dan pendekatan yang diperkenalkan oleh *local empowerment agents'* dalam pelancongan yang berasaskan komuniti khususnya bagi pembangunan *homestay*. Penilaian terhadap local empowerment ini dijalankan berdasarkan dua pendekatan yang berbeza iaitu daripada agensi kerajaan dan juga badan bukan kerajaan. Pendekatan *Actor-Network Theory* juga digunakan sebagai suatu rujukan asas dalam memahami peranan dan tanggungjawab agensi yang terlibat dalam pembangunan *homestay program* ini. Pendekatan kualitatif dipilih sebagai strategi kajian akan dijadikan landasan yang kukuh dalam memperolehi maklumat yang lebih jelas. Analisis terhadap empat indikator utama digunakan dalam mengenalpasti keberkesanan kaedah yang digunakan oleh dua local empowerment agents yang terlibat bagi dua homestay yang berlainan. Analisis berasaskan pembentukan tema seterusnya digunakan untuk menginterpretasikan data dalam bentuk kata kunci dan penceritaan. Analisis kemudiannya dilakukan untuk menilai keberkesanan kaedah yang digunakan oleh local empowerment agents ini berdasarkan empat indicator utama iaitu ekonomi, social, psikologi dan politik keatas dua kawasan kajian yang berbeza. *Local empowerment* yang dipraktikkan seterusnya diuji dan hasil analisis akhir menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua pendekatan yang digunakan oleh *local empowerment agent* mempunyai kekuatan dan kelebihan tersendiri. Implikasi terhadap kajian ini diperincikan bagi tujuan pembangunan homestay program pada masa akan datang.

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

TERM	:	**DEFINITION**
CBT	:	Community-based Tourism
Coding	:	Extract key words from the analysis
Constant Comparison	:	Making comparison continuously
DOA	:	Department of Agriculture
Flexible Frames	:	Selecting respondents in a flexible manner
In-Depth Interview	:	Explore an issue within the framework of guided conversation.
JKKK		*Jawatankuasa Kemajuan Kampung*
Key Informant	:	Experts to provide input for a situation
KOPEL	:	Koperasi Pelancongan
MOT	:	The Ministry of Tourism
MRRD	:	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organisations
Qualitative Evaluation Write Up	:	The process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data
SFD		Sabah Forestry Department
SKM	:	Suruhanjaya Koperasi Malaysia
SME	:	Small Medium Enterprise
Thematic Analysis	:	Identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (Themes) within data.
UNWTO	:	The World Tourism Organization
WWF	:	World Wildlife Fund

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The tourism sector has been a relative late-comer to the development debate and to its responsibilities and role in advancing sustainable development (Sofield, 2003). Community-based Tourism shows a progression, from a development perspective, as it incorporates the ideas of participation, empowerment and the importance of the social, rather than just economic or environmental aspects to development (Redman, 2009). It will be argued that without empowerment, sustainable tourism development by communities is difficult to attain (Sofield, 2001).

Like sustainable development, it is a term that has been abused and misused. Empowerment is also a major component of the debate about community development. This is because, communities in many countries are left outside the decision making process, policies and decisions are made *for* them not *by* them. One result is often an inability by governments, planners, and developers to implement policy or to maintain the sustainability of an initiative. This is a situation that should be addressed by community empowerment.

1.1 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

An examination of issues of tourism development has the potential to take the explorer down many different roads but in this instance a lesser travelled path points the compass towards the concept of “empowerment” and the involvement of communities in a small and remote part of the world. The issues of economic growth,

social equity and improved living standards of sustainable development and community empowerment are large and dominate much of the debate about development globally.

Tourism development can contribute to or adversely impact upon their resources. Policies may be contradictory, poorly implemented and focused on the short term rather than longer term. Externalities may interrupt and obstruct national objectives. Tourism development in Malaysia especially by communities raises many of the issues of development confronting many larger and powerful economies and empowerment by communities (Sofield, 2003). Understanding the series of case studies seeks to understand not only how communities in Malaysia have responded to tourism within their social and geopolitical space, but whether the environment governing the power relationship between community and agents of tourism development is an enabling or disabling one, whether it is empowering or disempowering.

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

Planning has in recent years attempted to deal with this situation by paying greater attention to the impacts of tourism on host communities and exploring ways to incorporate their views into the planning process (McIntosh and Goeldner, 1986). As stated by Murphy (1985), the approach to tourism planning that emphasize the control over the development process should reside in the local community. However, substantial problems remain in implementing the worthy thoughts about the process of community involvement (Haywood, 1998). Despite concerns about the need for community involvement in planning, empowerment in any conceptual detail has to lean towards to remain outside considerations of tourism development.

In discussing empowerment, the relationship between politics and tourism must also be verified, because politics is all about power. Power is about who gets *wha*t, *where*, *how* and *why*. While the relationship between the tourism industry and politics is of course concerned with government influence on the tourism policy, the primary impact is one of power (Hall, 1994). Only through an understanding of the politics of a situation can the concept of empowerment be meaningfully presented.

As had been mentioned by Sofield (2001), the concept of empowerment by and of communities is at once both a process and an outcome. It is a combination of several different emphases, although two key components are the role of agents (government and non-government) without which legality of action and behaviour may be challenged and sustainability of tourism development is difficult to achieve and the decision making model that moves beyond consultations to encompass application or implementation of decisions.

In this context, the study goes beyond a focus on its impact of tourism to explore the relevance of a body political, economic and sociological theory in terms of its application to tourism development. The aspects of development theory consist of concept of sustainable development with an enlarged concept of empowerment focus on community to provide a useful standpoint from which to consider the community/tourism development relationship. Based on the study context, empowerment of communities may be considered as a strictly social phenomenon. Similarly the concept of empowerment may be considered and outcome of the social processes of social exchange where those processes result in a change of the power balance between the actors.

Thus, this study will be focussing on the concepts of empowerment, tourism development (local community of the homestay program) and sustainable development to take account of the political and socio economic environments. It proposes five propositions:

Table 1.1: Propositions of Community Empowerment

Community Empowerment	1.	That without the element of empowerment tourism development at the level of community will have difficulty achieving sustainability.
	2.	The exercise of legitimate empowerment by traditionally oriented communities will of itself be an ineffectual mechanism for attempting sustainable tourism development.
	3.	That such traditional empowerment must be transformed into legal empowerment if sustainable tourism development is to be achieved.
	4.	That empowerment for such communities will usually require institutional

	change to allow a genuine reallocation of power to ensure appropriate changes in the unbalanced relationship of the community to the wider society.
5.	That, conversely, empowerment of local community cannot be taken by the communities concerned drawing only upon their own traditional resources, but will require support and authorization by the agents/state, if it is to avoid being short-lived.

Source: Adaption from Sofield, 2003

1.3 RESEARCH STATEMENT

One of the critiques towards CBT literature is that "CBT is often used as a method for ensuring long term sustainability of a tourism product rather than as a means for empowering local residents for wider community development (Blackstock's,2005). Development agencies are the initiator responsible in developing the local empowerment. However, most of the CBT's in Malaysia does not able to maintain their economic viability after fully acquired by the locals. Thus, this study is developed ***'to identify which local empowerment agents promote more sustainable approach towards CBT to ensure economic sustainability'.***

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBEJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to *"to identify which local empowerment agent promotes more sustainable approach towards CBT"*. In order to achieve this, four objectives are set to put this study on course. The objectives of the study are:

a) To evaluates the **roles of local empowerment agents** in Community Based Tourism
b) To assess the **approach introduced by the local empowerment agents** towards the local community
c) To examine the **variables of local community empowerment** in Community Based Tourism

1.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

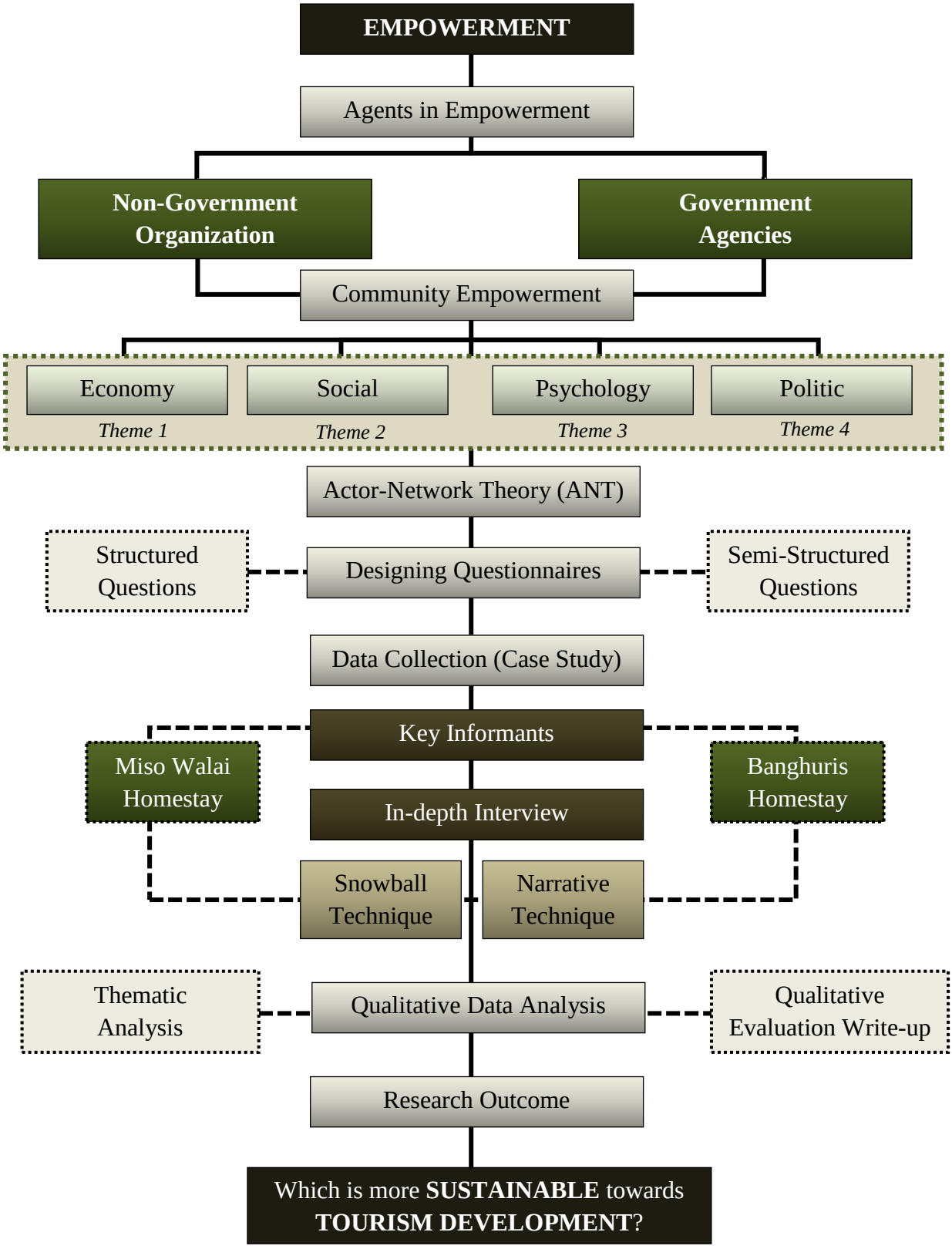

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework of the Research

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

1.6 SCOPE OF RESEARCH

To achieve the aims and objectives of the research that have been outlined, here are some of the scopes designed to be used as a specific guide for this study:

a) Understanding of the literature review related to the roles and performance of the local empowerment agents, the approaches introduced by the local empowerment agents, variables and concept of empowerment and Actor-Network Theory in CBT and its implications towards the tourism development.

   i. Roles and performance of the local empowerment agents
      - Government and non-government Initiator
      - Other supporting actor
   ii. The approaches introduced by the local empowerment agents,
      - Empowerment framework
      - Community Involvement/Homestay Provider
   iii. Variables and concept of community empowerment
      - Economic empowerment
      - Social empowerment
      - Psychological empowerment
      - Political empowerment
   iv. Actor-Network Theory in CBT
      - Key actors in CBT actor-networks

b) The data needed in order to understand more clearly about the study conducted and how the data were used in designing the questionnaires as well as analyzing the data. (Refer **Table 1.2**).

Table 1.2: Vital Data

Designing Questionnaires		
Main Criteria	**Input**	**Sources**
Homestay Background	• Initiator Background • Key Actors/Agents • Tourism Activities Activities	Fieldwork in Banghuris Homestay and Miso Walai Homestay
Economic Empowerment	• Entrepreneurship • Employment and business opportunities • Economic distribution Income level	Lindberg et al. (1996) and Wilkinson & Pratiwi (1995)
Social Empowerment	• Infrastructures • Local community participation • Strong community group • Local community sense of cohesion and integrity	Sproule (2000)
Psychological Empowerment	• Lifestyle and social values • Awareness towards cultural asset • Local community self-confidence and pride • Local knowledge and respect • Optimistic people	Zeppel (1997), Mansperger (1995), Addison (200) and Koch (1997)
Political Empowerment	• Involvement in decision making • Local representatives • Partnership and collaboration • Control and management • Tourism master plan	Friedmann (1992), Pinnock (2000), Liu (1994) and Ceballos- Lascurain (1996)
Fieldwork		
Main Criteria	**Input**	**Sources**
Study Area	As a basis for organizing the study	Banghuris Homestay, Selangor and Miso Walai Homestay, Sabah
Respondents	List of key actors and local empowerment agents involved in the homestay development	
Data Analysis		
Main Criteria	**Input**	**Sources**
Information	Variables used in evaluating the local empowerment agents in community based tourism	In-depth interviews with the respondents involved in the homestay program

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

c) Implications obtained through the study conducted:

i. Understand the approaches used by two different local empowerment agents in Community-based Tourism. The difference between these two approaches will be then formulated into a reference and as a guideline in assessing the used of the development approaches towards the development of CBT in Malaysia specifically in homestay program.

ii. Evaluate and understand the differences in terms of local empowerment developed by both homestay with different approaches introduced by different local empowerment agents. Clear understanding towards these development approaches helps the local empowerment agents to plan and offer the products and services in every aspects of tourism specifically homestay program.

iii. Assessing the role and performance of local empowerment agents' that have become the influential development agents in the tourism industry through the sustainable activities.

1.7 RESEARCH APPROACH

The research framework act as the main guideline for the researcher in conducting the research so as to be carried out as had been planned. The framework of this research consists of **5 stages** as stated below:

i. Stage One: Preliminary Study

The preliminary stage involves the research statement related to the roles and performance of the local empowerment agents and the development approaches introduced in the CBT particularly the homestay program. Apart from that are the formulation of the research aims and objectives, scope of the study and study approach. This had been defined in order to determine the direction of the study as well as to ensure that the study conducted can successfully meet the aims and objectives that have been outlined earlier.

ii. Stage Two: Literature Review

The literature review is important as a reference point for the entire study. Besides being able to give a clearer understanding to the researchers, it is also helpful to visualize in the broader context of the research. At this stage, aspects related to the knowledge and understanding of the research topic includes the roles of the local empowerment agents, the approaches introduced by the local empowerment agents, concept of local empowerment, the relation of Actor-Network theory in CBT as well as the impact and implications towards the CBT particularly the homestay program. Understanding of the theory is an important indicator in the formation of this study.

iii. Stage Three: Data Collection

This chapter explains the methodology of the study covering the data collection and analysis techniques. It details the chosen methods used in this study to collect data and to analyze the data. It details the justification of using a qualitative approach for this study, explains each stages of the study and methods used to collect the data: semi-formal / informal face-to-face interview surveys, semi-formal / informal in-depth interviews; journal entry; and selection of respondents until the data analysis procedures.

a. Primary Data

Primary data is the information obtained and gathered directly from the fieldwork carried out by researcher.

Table1.3: Primary Data

Study Area	• Banghuris Homestay, Selangor • Miso Walai Homestay, Sabah
Information Needed	• Local Empowerment Agents in Community Based Tourism (Government and Non-Government Organization) • Empowerment Framework for Community Based Tourism

	• Application of Actor Network Theory in Community Based Tourism
Information Sources	• Role of the local empowerment agents • The approaches introduced by the local empowerment agents • Local empowerment framework ❖ Economic Empowerment ❖ Social Empowerment ❖ Psychological Empowerment ❖ Political Empowerment

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

b. Secondary Data

Secondary data is the information attained through printed reference materials such as websites, articles, journals, newspaper articles and academic books related to the study conducted (Refer **Table 1.4**).

Table 1.4: Secondary Data

Data	Type of References	Main References Sources
Local Empowerment Agents in Community Based Tourism, Development of Homestay Program	Website	• Ministry of Tourism, Sabah • www.misowalaihomestay.com • www.banghurishomestay.com
	Article	• Journal of Sustainable Tourism; Information and Empowerment: The Keys to Achieving Sustainable Tourism *etc.*
	Journal	• Annals of Tourism Research • Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities (Scheyvens, 1999) • Empowerment and Community Planning (Sadan Elisheva, 1997)
	Books	• Tourism & Development: Concepts & Issues (Richard Sharpley, 2002) • Empowerment: The politics of alternative development (John Friedmann, 1990) • Empowerment for Sustainable Tourism Development (Trevor H. B. Sofield, 2003) • Social Work and Empowerment (Adams, R., 2003)

Research Methodology (Qualitative Research)	Website	• Wikipedia/ Encyclopedia
	Books	• Qualitative research in tourism : ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies / Phillimore, Jenny • Research methods for leisure and tourism: a practical guide / Veal, A. J. • Tourism analysis : a handbook / Smith, Stephen L. J.
	Thesis Reference	• Tracing Tourism Translations: Opening the black box of development assistance in community-based tourism in Viet Nam (Kirsten Maree Lake Huxford, 2010)
	Monograph Reference	• An Evaluation of the Role and Performance of NGOs in Community Based Tourism at Ulu Geroh, Gopeng, Malaysia (Monograph No. 9, July 2011)

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

iv. Stage Four: Analysis and Research Findings

At this stage, all the data obtained will be analyzed in detailed. The data will be analyzed based on the in-depth interviews conducted with the key informants for both case studies. Analysis and findings of this data will further form a 'development model' that would act the basis for this study. This chapter will also highlights and discusses the results of the data obtained from the fieldwork during the site visit. These findings are crucial in order to provide a clearer understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

v. Stage Five: Conclusion and Significance of the Research

This chapter provides the conclusions and significance of the findings. This chapter highlights the significant points of the findings thus consequently offer recommendations and suggestions that can help in empowering the local community through more sustainable approach. Similarly, it also underlines the contribution of this study to the existing body of knowledge in the development of community-based tourism as well as suggestions for further research that can be taken up from this study.

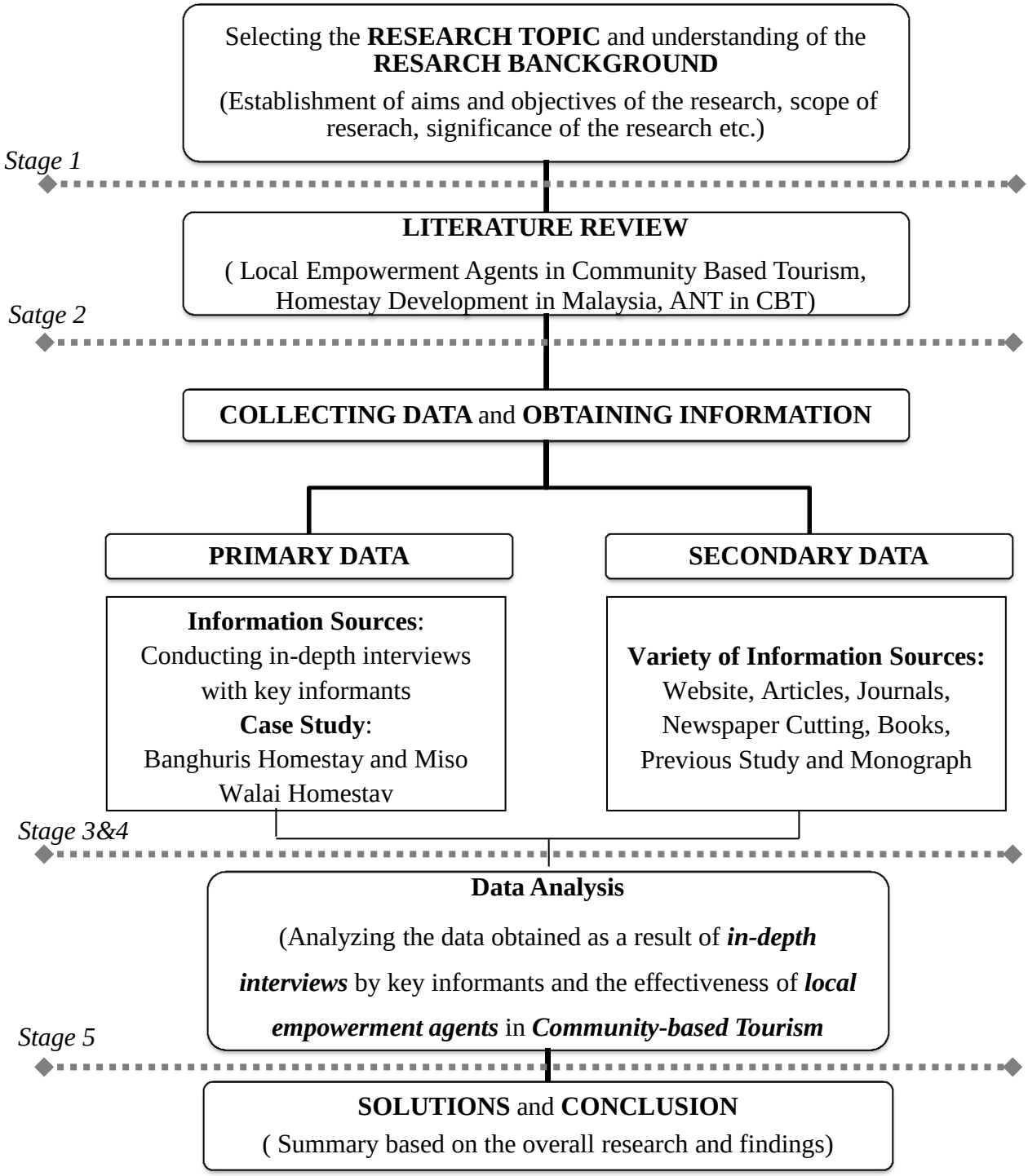

Figure 1.2: Research Flow Chart

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

1.8 THEORITICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL DIRECTION

This study will be specifically focus on the qualitative methods as a research strategy and case studies approach towards the overall study. Research methodology in qualitative context is summarized as follows (**Figure 1.3**). Explanation of the study methodology is detailed in the next chapter in order to obtain a clearer picture of the overall methods and techniques used in this study (Refer **Chapter 3: Methodology**).

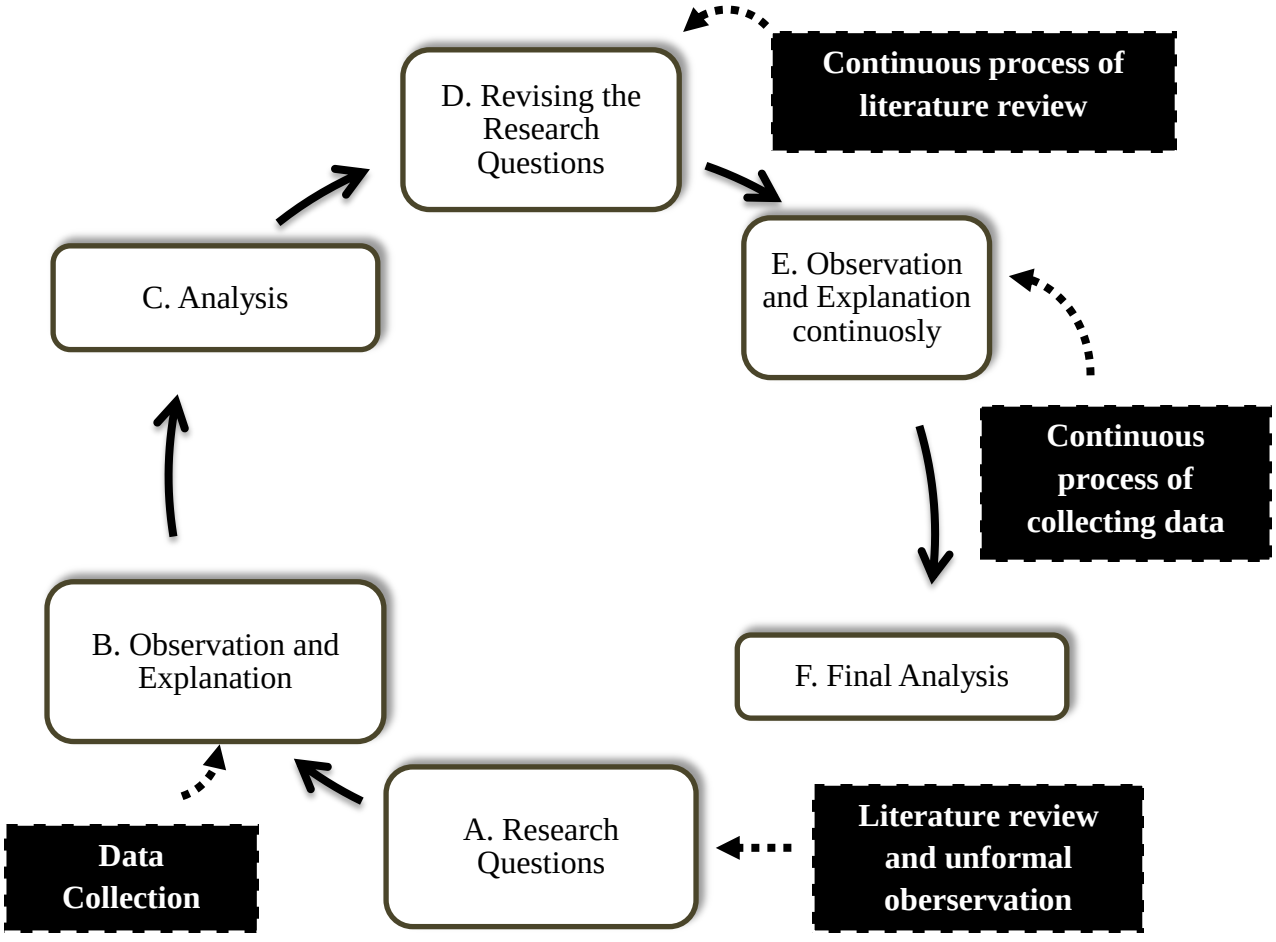

Figure 1.3: Research Methodology in Qualitative Context

Source: Adaptation from Veal, 2006

The qualitative approach developed for this study was appropriate “to provide the evidence according to the nature of the homestay which was concerned with many various social aspects, environmental concerns, cultural phenomenon as well as economic matters and management problems”. Hence an in-depth understanding of such circumstances was considered essential.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Generally, the importance of this study is to identify and to access the role and performance of the local empowerment agents in Community Based Tourism which act as one of the key initiator in tourism industry specifically homestay program in Malaysia. Apart from that, the final outcome of this study is also expected to assist towards a greater understanding of the difference approaches introduced by the local empowerment agents and to determine which one of these approaches is more sustainable towards the homestay development in Malaysia.

This study will be focusing on two areas which will act as the basis in conducting the research. This research was also developed to examine which model or approach used by the initiators is more sustainable towards the homestay development that can be effectively applied in Community Based Tourism or otherwise. Research tentative schedule was designed in order to smooth down the overall process while conducting the research based on the time consume. (Refer **Table 1.5**)

Table 1.5: Research Tentative Schedule

Week	**1-3**	**4**	**5-8**	**9-10**	**11-12**	**13-14**
Chapter 1(Preliminary Stage)						
Chapter 2 (Formation of Literature Review						
Final Stage of Data Collection						
Chapter 3 (Research Methodology)						
Chapter 4 & 5 (Data Analysis and Conclusion)						
First Draft						
Final Draft						

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

Through this chapter, the basic information required in achieving the goals of the research can be designed and detailed. This chapter is important in helping researcher and readers to acquire a better understanding towards the overall study and some of the objectives that had been highlighted. In addition, several other important indicators were also described such as the research questions and scope of the research which act as the foremost support in conducting the research. Clear explanations on the research objectives, hereby need a theoretical study that can build up the research so that it can provide the best possible analysis and hence gives a clearer picture of the overall study. Therefore, the next chapter will explain more in detail the theoretical framework based on the theories and understanding related to this study.

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