

Title: Tourism cooperatives for scaling up community

Author/Authors: Nor Haniza Mohamad, Amran Hamzah

Abstract: Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to share how a tourism cooperative creates economic sustainability as well as bringing socio-cultural and environmental benefits to its members. Design/methodology/approach – The authors' case study was the Miso Walai Homestay in Batu Puteh on the Kinabatangan River of Sabah, Malaysia. In-depth interviews were conducted with cooperative managers and cooperative members who were identified through the purposive sampling method. Direct observation was used to gain an understanding of ground reality. Findings – A community cooperative effectively manages economic, socio-cultural, and environmental concerns of the local people. Society's perception of entrepreneurship and main-streaming has changed. Shareholdership enables higher community involvement in the decision-making processes, increases tourism income distribution, solidifies the sense of ownership, strengthens social cohesion and, inevitably, increases community support. Practical implications – The lessons learned from the experience of the Model of Economically Sustainable Community Tourism (MESOCOT) in using a community cooperative to run its community-based tourism (CBT), which eventually expanded its economic benefits, are relevant to researchers and practitioners, and can guide other local CBT organizations in Malaysia. Originality/value – Although the case study referred to a specific community in Malaysia, the findings do prove that an effective model for community-based tourism is possible and has potential for replication in other places with similar enabling environments.