

Exploring Culture and Sustainability: Community Participation in Indigenous Tourism in Malaysia

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Abstract: Nowadays, Indigenous tourism contributes to the conservation of cultural heritage and further supports sustainable development for Indigenous communities, which ultimately increases socio-economic well-being. By providing unique cultural experiences, Indigenous tourism gives greater recognition and respect for the culture while also economically benefiting. This paper aims to examine how such dynamics operate in the context of Indigenous tourism from the viewpoint and experiences of Indigenous community members who participated in tourism initiatives. Identifying culture as one of the crucial parameters that determine successful outcomes in this field, this study intends to explore how people participate in sustainable development through tourism and close important gaps using a cultural lens. Numerous databases containing scholarly research, including the Emerald Insights, Science Direct, and Web of Science, have been used in this study. As a response to the ever-growing call for inclusive and respectful tourism, this study aims to contribute valuable insights and geographical relevance to defining policy change, practice modifications, or academic pursuits of Indigenous tourism. The result of this study will fill crucial empirical research gaps in terms of how cultural restoration, tourism management, and community participation can be optimized for sustainable development with nuanced voices that are necessary to drive policy change as well as practice modifications.

Keywords: *Indigenous Tourism, Community Participation, Sustainability, Tourism Management, Culture.*

1. Introduction and Background

According to Tourism Malaysia (2023), tourism plays a critical role in bolstering Malaysia's economy, with the industry contributing RM28,228.3 million in 2022. Hamid et al. (2022) emphasized that the 12th Malaysia Plan supports this by enhancing economic opportunities for various communities, including Indigenous populations. Designating tourism as a National Key Economic Activity (NKEA) opens doors for rural and Indigenous tourism, which is increasingly popular worldwide for showcasing unique cultural heritage.

Indigenous populations form a substantial and varied demographic segment globally, covering an extensive spectrum of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. According to the United Nations (2023), there are 476 million Indigenous individuals worldwide, accounting for 6.2% of the total global population. These communities are distributed over 90 countries and encompass more than 5,000 distinct groups. Such diversity manifests in a rich tapestry of cultures, religions, traditions, languages, and histories (Bruchac, 2020). The widespread presence and cultural depth of these Indigenous groups highlight the intricacy of their roles and contributions within society, underscoring the importance of recognizing this diversity for understanding their unique viewpoints and effectively addressing the challenges they encounter today.

In Malaysia, the Department of Orang Asli Development (2022) identified three main categories of Indigenous populations in Peninsular Malaysia: The Senoi, Negrito, and Proto-Malay. The total Indigenous population in this region is reported to be 209,575 individuals, with the Senoi tribe being the most populous, accounting for 115,712 individuals or 55.21% of the Indigenous total. The Proto-Malay group follows with 87,541 individuals or 41.77%, while the Negrito, the smallest group, comprises 6,322 individuals or 3.02%. This characteristic, where a few groups constitute a major portion of the Indigenous demographic, echoes trends observed globally, similar to Canada such as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations, as reported in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2024).

Indigenous tourism has been attracting a lot of focus in the wider tourism business, which means that many are becoming more involved with Indigenous as well (Butler, 2021). This heightened involvement marks their

participation in steering and leveraging wider tourism and economic developments. Despite the potential for social and economic benefits, Indigenous tourism remains marred with challenges related to understanding how culture informs community participation (Fan et al., 2020), which ultimately determines sustainable development outcomes (Matatolu, 2020). This study aims to understand the complexities of Indigenous tourism, focusing on how culture and sustainability impact community commitment and link with performance outcomes from tourism activities within an Indigenous context.

Indigenous communities worldwide are on the rise in interacting with tourism, and thus there is an urgent necessity to improve its power of preserving or making a gain out of their cultural heritage (Alamineh et al., 2023) while respecting them as well. Indigenous tourism can provide pathways to economic development as well as cultural renewal, but it also raises questions about what is considered authentic and how indigeneity should be represented amid settler colonialism. This ethnographic study of the culture and sustainability underlying Indigenous tourism is intended to make a scholarly contribution toward more socially inclusive and equitable forms of tourism practice for both Indigenous communities and the overarching sector.

Tourism has been popularly acknowledged as an effective economic growth driver from the perspective of Indigenous communities (Mansor et al., 2019). As highlighted by Mansor et al. (2019), tourism development includes the participation of the Indigenous community, contributing to transformational impacts on socio-cultural aspects. Their participation not only helps to maintain economic opportunities but also benefits the survival and perpetuation of ancestral culture, which therefore strengthens community resilience to socio-economic transformations. There are some ways in which Indigenous communities have negotiated the changes associated with tourism development and found a balance between accommodation for and benefiting from it (Scheyvens et al., 2021). The focus of sustainable tourism planning and research on tourist impacts is concerns over attitudes and perceptions by Indigenous communities.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the perceptions and outlooks of Indigenous communities on tourism development to shape these findings for sustainable policy measures as well as future inquiry into understanding sustainability implications through an Indigenous perspective. Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

- To evaluate the cultural aspects of Indigenous community participation in promoting tourism initiatives.
- To investigate the effect of culture on the success and sustainability of Indigenous tourism initiatives.
- To analyze the Indigenous tourism strategies towards enhancing the sustainability of cultural awareness and sustainable tourism practices.

To achieve the above objectives, this study intends to answer the following research questions:

- What are the aspects of promoting tourism initiatives about cultural considerations in terms of involving Indigenous communities?
- What kind of cultural factors may contribute to or detract from the success and sustainability of Indigenous tourism initiatives?
- What are the Indigenous tourism strategies that can be applied to enhance the sustainability of cultural awareness and sustainable tourism practices?

2. Literature Review

Indigenous Tourism

The concept of Indigenous tourism has been identified as a critical area that may mediate cultural preservation, economic development and social justice among Indigenous communities. Indigenous tourism activities are generally related to the appreciation of nature, participation in local practices and immersion into cultural experiences that lead to increased overall happiness (Wu et al., 2020). Wei et al. (2021) have pointed to the potential of thinking about Indigenous people as just another group of tourists for advancing deeper frameworks that could understand indigeneity and explain the meaning of indigenization. This perspective is intended to contribute to a theoretical understanding of the trans-local constitution of indigeneity by emphasizing complexity beyond any singular identity categories that can be subsumed within Indigenous

communities. It recognizes Indigenous people as other tourists, in search of meaningful experiences that reflect who they are and what they want to become, thus complicating the rather fixed representations of Indigenous people and their cultures. This approach helps in presenting Indigenous tourism as a favorable approach that not only acknowledges the modernity and globalization in Indigenous peoples' communities.

According to Dahlan et al. (2023), Indigenous tourism can play a much bigger role in improving socio-economic conditions for people by providing jobs and keeping land and infrastructure well maintained as assets to local economies, all the while bolstering pride among those who are involved. However, it poses complex issues in maintaining cultural identity and an efficient local administration at the same time. For instance, the arrival of tourists tends to create consumerization of cultures, which may in turn reduce the importance and meaning behind various practices. This underlines the need for Malaysia to fine-tune its management approaches that would enhance the conservation-usage balance that the people had adopted on cultural resources in their bid to develop profitable tourism products without compromising on culture.

Even though roles in employment and economic development of Indigenous people have moved beyond the traditional forms, Butler (2021) argued that future studies must explore further the economic development dimensions, which appear to have changed with the new motivation and expansion of tourism activities. For example, Butler (2021) mentioned that in the course of the growing complexity of Indigenous tourism businesses, the parties can intensify the discussion regarding the increased tourist flows' management and the expansion of the types of tourism offerings. Raja et al. (2022) also highlighted that Indigenous tourism in Madhya Pradesh, India, requires an integrated approach relating to human resources, social capacities, concerns for nature and heritage, engagement of Indigenous communities, and marketing of local products. Thus, there is balance and fairness in the distribution of the impact of tourist activities within the community and, at the same time, it guarantees that the said activities will adhere to the community's ideals and standards.

Self-identifications presented by Indigenous people on tourism platforms are diametrically opposite to the non-Indigenous tourists' landscapes hence reaffirming Indigenous identity as well as acknowledging the authority of cultural heritage managers (Ambros & Buzinde, 2021). Such self-representations are valuable assets for Indigenous people in their way of controlling the discursive field and providing truthful information to tourists about their cultures. Thus, through Indigenous cultures' presentation of their cultural terms, Indigenous communities can effectively work against stereotyping and mediate a proper and more appropriately engaging interaction with the tourists.

Moreover, Chen (2021) sought to improve the significance of Indigenous tourism in a multicultural segmented market by matching the tourists' expectations and experiences. This means in the process of constructing tourism products, emphasis should be placed on the creation of products with real cultural content that will at the same time meet the desires of different tourist groups. In this way, Chen (2021) wanted to promote sustainable tourism that will help in the development of the economy while paying respect to the local culture. Therefore, this approach emphasizes the importance of culture and sustainability in the existence of tourism development planning.

Indigenous Community Participation

Today, Indigenous community participation is incorporated into sustainable development, environmental management, and cultural conservation frameworks. Thompson et al., (2020) in their paper highlighted that a higher level of Indigenous community participation in environmental monitoring indicates that they have different monitoring goals, measures, and results compared to the cases with lower Indigenous community participation. This discovery revealed that Indigenous people contribute valuable 'epistemic resources' to enhance processes of environmental development by offering their valuable Indigenous knowledge and principles within these programs. For instance, Bullock et al. (2020) illustrated how Indigenous participation in collaborative environmental governance in Canada, initiated by NGOs, can be effectively enhanced through four specific participation structures: In the first category, there are external advisory committees, the second category is internal board subcommittees, the third category is hybrid internal-external advisory boards and in the last category there still internal ad hoc groups, but their members are selected from internal resources. These structures create a more appropriate and proper way of involving these Indigenous people so that they are not left out of governance systems.

Drake et al. (2022) performed a scoping review of the literature on Indigenous participation in carrying out coastal and marine research and monitoring in Inuit Nunangat, Canada. Hence, it is evident that there is a significant gap in the definition and measurement of participation as demonstrated by articles published in the scientific journals. The qualitative analysis of 72 works revealed that only 10 percent of the sources provided distinct definitions for participation terms aggravating a severe absence of coherence in the literature and the subsequent requirement for the more distinct definitions of the participation terms. This can cause a breakdown in the effectiveness of participatory approaches, significant to the enhancement of culture such as definition and structure for enabled Indigenous groups participation. They include theoretical and methodological issues arising from the fact that important definitions, which are fundamental tools for the operationalization of the concept of participation concerning Indigenous stakeholders' input and needs, are unclear and inconsistent.

Musadad et al. (2022) discussed about tourism participation of the Indigenous community in the context of Bukit Tigapuluh National Park, Indonesia. Consequently, the study found that explaining Indigenous participation in tourism activities, there is a positive relationship with set conservation goals, forest management as well as improvement of the community because they are positively impacting activities. As demonstrated in this case, the incorporation of Indigenous people leads to sustainable tourism as an effort to expand the sector that is socially and economically beneficial to the environment and Indigenous persons. Therefore, this study has highlighted that Indigenous people in the area of Bukit Tigapuluh have effectively achieved the link of sustainable economic activities with conservation and cultural sustainability goals. The positive impacts that the community perceives are increased concern for the environment, local people's additional income, and cultural heritage marketing.

Sustainable Development

The Indigenous peoples' right to sustainable development has been labeled as a "cornerstone" of modern policy agendas as a reflection of self-determination as well as the need to diversify support instruments (Nikitin, 2022). This principle postulates that Indigenous people should have control over their affairs and be involved in any decisions concerning their physical space, assets, and culture. The measures related to sustainable development policies have to involve Indigenous people, providing them with the opportunity to determine their further development. This empowerment includes the promotion of their autonomy as well as providing an adequate accompaniment of their projects and proper legislation. In this way, policies can make almost any initiative not only sustainable but also more sensitive to equity and inclusion.

There are issues like the protection of land rights, the appropriate estimation of the tourists' demand, and the management structures that should be supported to ensure the sustainability of Indigenous people's tourism within protected areas (Mach & Vahradian, 2019). The secure land rights offer flexibility to the Indigenous people and their communities to steward their land resources using their Indigenous practices and the principles of sustainability. The correct estimation of tourist' demand is useful to further coordinate and control tourism-related actions to prevent excessive overcrowding that results in negative impacts on the environment and traditional culture. Participatory management approaches with communities, national and local governments and other stakeholders ensure that measures of tourism development and promotion are premised on benefitting the communities and their values hence; promoting the shared stewardship of resources.

Thus, Indigenous tourism in the forested area targets sustainability goals that require the engagement of both the community people and administrative bodies. Salazar-Sepúlveda et al. (2022) offered a massive systematic review that figured out the features of sustainable tourism including limiting the number of tourists, bringing adequate infrastructures, and enforcing conservative measures. They also call for measures for the controlling number of tourists with a view of avoiding exploitation of natural resources by many people. Moreover, they call for adequate infrastructure that may include environmentally friendly products, especially tourism-related products like accommodation units that will have the least impact on the environment. Conservation also forms another important pillar of tourism because, through the conservation of habitats and species, the balance of nature should be preserved to avoid the negative impact of tourism activities.

Similarly, Chang et al. (2021) warned that Indigenous tourism should try to reach sustainability by adopting supportive government policies and pursuing the benefits related to business, people, and the environment. There is often a need for government support for entering and maintaining active participation and the necessary funding and investment as well as adequate policies that support Indigenous people and their sustainable needs. In addition, government support refers to the direct and indirect funding of community-based tourism initiatives, skills development interventions that strengthen the local human capital and policies that support Indigenous peoples' justice and sustainable ecotourism. When implemented, such initiatives can generate employment and income for the Indigenous people hence, improving the economic effects of the policy. From the social aspect, they may bring about unity of the people as well as a boost to cultural personality while from the environmental aspect, they can extend support towards the preservation of the natural base as well as the species.

Maza and Calfucura (2020) provided a critical insight into the policies on tourism development in Chile, and South America: on the one hand, Indigenous tourism and on the other, Indigenous people's political representation. Such disparities show that while approved policies seek to stimulate tourism, there is a vacuum as regards the political and social rights of indigenous people. Failure to be granted political identity and support, Indigenous tourism ventures may experience the above difficulties like inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and inadequate marketing. To overcome it, they call for the political and cultural rights of Indigenous people to be respected in the process of tourism improvement. This includes addressing past wrongs done to them, affording legal status to their territories and natural endowments, and encouraging Indigenous people's inclusion in tourism management.

Sustainable Indigenous tourism development must hence involve processes of building Indigenous pride, the retention of Indigenous knowledge, and partnership with the tourism sector partners as evident at the Pha Mi Indigenous Tourism in Chiang Rai, Thailand (Yiamjanya et al., 2022). These measures help minimize cases of cultural misunderstandings and scenarios where Indigenous populations end up being disadvantaged by tourism development. This intervention has positively incorporated cultural values and cultural practices in tourism-related activities making the experience real to the tourists. This has gone a long way in generating pride among the Pha Mi community members concerning their culture and history to undertake the responsibility of passing down this information to the next generations. Collaboration with tourism partners like local traders, the government and non-governmental organizations has also been essential in getting all the support necessary to come up with sustainable tourism that will benefit the society both economically and socially.

Some Indigenous tourism enterprises in Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand use appropriate strategies of sustainable tourism management based on Indigenous philosophies and practices (Scheyvens et al., 2021). These enterprises are twofold as they help other Indigenous & non-Indigenous people to understand cultural differences, assist in developing local businesses, and improve the environment in which they exist. For instance, in Fiji, tourism enterprises offer cultural tourism working with local people to organize cultural tourism packages and ecotourism accommodations that depict the cultural practices and lifestyle of Indigenous Fijians. Australia's Indigenous tourism enterprises provide services like guided tours through which people are explained about the region's geography, fauna, and the Indigenous culture. In New Zealand, owing to the tourism ventures owned by Māori, various activities have been developed that have the aim of introducing Māori culture, history and way of life to the tourists. These enterprises act as successful templates for sustainable development pointing at how Indigenous people's support through tourism can be attained concurrently with cultural exchange and conservation of natural resources.

Culture

Culture is one of the factors that may or may not help in the nourishment and enhancement of Indigenous tourism. Indigenous tourism functions as a channel through which Indigenous people and their traditions signifying languages, history, chants, art, movements, ways of hunting, celebrations, and rules can be preserved. However, the problems are with the navigational practices of individuals and communities who own cultural assets and representations. These issues have been mentioned by Ruhanen and Whitford (2019) concerning Indigenous tourism or cultural tourism as they support the maintenance of cultural identification but, it must be recognized and dealt with depending on its case so that Indigenous culture will not turn into another product

that is for sale. The acute issue lies in the fact that only the Indigenous communities have to be supported with their potential to manage their intangible heritage unsuitably for external demand that functions predominantly in the sphere of standardized global tourism.

Even though tourism is generally frowned upon since it brings confusion to their culture, the Indigenous people of the Tz'utujil Maya Community, specifically the people of Santiago Atitlán, Guatemala, have proven that in as much as tourism poses many challenges to Indigenous communities, it equally can be used to empower them by embracing their cultural beliefs. Harbor and Hunt (2021) explained in detail how this model increases, for example, self-governance, self-determination, and equity concerning tourism-related issues. Their research presents insights into how the Tz'utujil Maya try to redress some of the improper uses of their culture such as in tourism activities. There is no passive acceptance of cultural depictions, but rather the negotiation of culture production about authenticity and representation, which determines how the participants' culture ends up in tourism circulation. This process entails an ongoing discussion in the community on the kind of cultural portrayal that is acceptable for the dissemination of their culture to the outside world while at the same time satisfying the tourism market.

Suggesting some examples in Malaysia, the Mah Meri tribe failed to become assimilated into tourism by integrating their cultural assets including wood carving, the carving of masks, the weaving of pandanus, cultural dances, and other performances into their tourism package. Some of the exposure to the Mah Meri culture was acknowledged by Wahab et al. (2020) as partly owed to the intervention of the involved tourism authorities. These authorities also assist the tribe, to oversee the preservation of the true nature of the cultural practices in their midst and also in advertising the specialty of these practices. It is the double vision that would guarantee that the Mah Meri would not be deprived of the economic advantages that come from tourism while at the same time remaining culturally intact. Tourism authorities also support the process and contribute resources, training, and marketing to guarantee the sustainability, and profitability of the Mah Meri's cultural tourism activities.

As another example, the Batek tribe of Malaysia struggles with the need to preserve their cultural integrity and develop tourism services at the same time. Fan et al. (2020) discussed various dilemmas concerning the process of modernization that the Batek tribe faces as well as their attempts to maintain their cultural identity. Thus, the Batek face the problem of how to realize tourism without risking domination over their history and culture. This struggle is emblematic of a broader issue faced by many Indigenous communities, where they have to find ways to effectively use tourism as a source of income, while at the same time preserving the cultures of the peoples that live in those areas.

While analyzing the cultural aspect in the tourism context, Indonesian interpretation tends to define cultural elements in terms of identification and tourism attractiveness without emphasizing the value of culture as an economic asset. According to Mangku et al. (2022), this narrow aim is problematic because it does not mention the overall endogenous economic impacts that could be created if there is a more collaborative approach to cultural tourism. Based on their findings, culture could be seen as an economic capital meaning that the promotion of tourism should be done in a way that will foster cultural tourism that will promote the establishment of economic opportunities in Indigenous communities. This course of action implies a different way of thinking and perceiving, where cultural heritage has to cease to be looked at as a mere sightseeing spot, but, as a living and beneficial economic resource.

3. Methodology

The systematic literature review (SLR) concluded from this study provided the following results that correspond with the research objectives revolving around Indigenous tourism, community participation, and sustainability. The steps involved in the review process were asserting different databases including Emerald Insight, Science Direct, and Web of Science, which was done based on their database of peer-reviewed journals ascertaining its availability of material. In total, 23 articles were scrutinized, which entails the presence of a solid base for the discussion concerning this study. One of the recurring topics to be discussed is the participation of Indigenous community members in the destinations. In doing so, this participation improves

the reality of the tourists' experiences and exemplifies the implementation of sustainable practices that align with cultural and environmental preservation.

Furthermore, in the course of the review, several successful sustainable practices geared towards culture conservation with equal concern for the environment when contrasting economic gains and cultural values were also witnessed. Another area of learning was the economic outcomes of Indigenous tourism, highlighted by surveys that showed that community participation results in improved revenues and employment for the Indigenous people hence serving the purpose of the research which aimed at gauging such returns. Nevertheless, literature also revealed some of the key issues of Indigenous populations, such as scarcity of resources, prejudice, and influence of non-Indigenous tourism actors, which are essential to analyze the multifaceted nature of Indigenous tourism. In addition, emerged more pronounced knowledge gaps, especially those associated with the long-term impacts of Indigenous tourism on culture and community resilience. These insights not only give an overview of the state of knowledge of Indigenous tourism but also suggest the future of this study, thus staying in tune with the scholarly literature while addressing the challenges and gaps identified.

To perform this study, a set of specific keywords was used in the search strategy that would encompass the whole idea of the study. The primary keywords were "indigenous tourism" and compound keywords, which consisted of "indigenous AND tourism," which aimed to search for information about the specialized characteristics of tourism related to Indigenous peoples. In more detail, to expand the focus on the dynamics of local engagement identified in the literature, the study also used "indigenous community participation," and "indigenous AND community participation." Consequently, the search allowed for the consideration of the Indigenous people's participation in tourism activities.

Apart from the keywords on community participation, other keywords used in the review were connected to sustainability and tourism management to capture the research that analyses the sustainability of practices applied in Indigenous communities concerning tourism. The addition of the word "Indigenous" and the blend of two words "Indigenous AND culture" enabled the research to connect with works that address survival, transformation, and the consequences of cultural assets resulting from tourism advancement.

By employing these keywords, the literature search was conducted to construct a strong notion of how Indigenous tourism works, how it impacts and incorporates Indigenous communities, and finally, how impediments towards sustainable Indigenous tourism can be conquered. The findings from these databases were similarly diverse as they included work with theoretical discussion, case studies, and empirical research findings that collectively offered the basis for analysis in this study.

4. Potential Outcome and Direction for Future Research

The objective of this study is to provide a deep analysis of the cultural and sustainable intervention in Indigenous tourism in Malaysia. It is equally important to identify the expected impacts since the goals are multiple, complex, and highly important. In the first place, it is believed that this paper will elucidate the roles of cultural artifacts, including practices, arts, and communal activities as critical determinants of elusive Indigenous tourism development. Thus, it will expose how cultural values are central to tourism operations as a means of generating remarkable economic returns to the Indigenous people's societies (Wahab et al., 2020). Furthermore, the study will yield important findings concerning the degree and type of community participation in tourism activities, stressing positive incentives and negative restraints on participation. Through the assessment of existing community-centered tourism development initiatives, the research shall present examples, which shall inform the implementation of similar contexts among Indigenous communities (Mansor et al., 2019).

Moreover, the research seeks to find out how sustainability is understood and practiced in Indigenous tourism, and perhaps more distinctive, how the development and conservation of Indigenous cultures interrelate. It will be possible to discover the vital long-term success of sustainable activities, for instance, the environmental management within tourism and culturally sound advertisements (Ransfield & Reichenberger, 2021). Last but not least, this study is ready to provide strong policy implications for governments, tourism authorities, and

Indigenous communities regarding the support of Indigenous tourism initiatives and business models in such a way that the Indigenous people's culture and values will be respected while the economic growth will be achieved. Useful recommendations will be made to ensure that tourism operators and community leaders implement and improve the efficiency and sustainability of their interventions (Dahlan et al., 2023).

In addition, there are some suggestions for potential future studies to improve the conceptualization of Indigenous tourism. Firstly, the longitudinal study is important to cover the Indigenous tourism projects' developments over several years to determine their sustainability and cultural imprinting. Exploring the external environment that affects Indigenous tourism initiatives' ability to be successful and sustainable will also be necessary (Simpong et al., 2022). A comparative study of the progress of Indigenous tourism efforts at the regional and international level within Malaysia will enable researchers to find out common success promoters and contextualized challenges facing the success of Indigenous tourism initiatives. Comparing and analyzing how different Indigenous populations change their setting up of tourism with regards to culture or environment will therefore lead to a better understanding of the possibilities and viability of such initiatives (Scheyvens et al., 2021).

Furthermore, how social media and technology, in general, can be used to boost Indigenous tourism and maintain cultural integrity at the same time, can also present new approaches to enrich the tourists' experience and safeguard the Indigenous peoples' identities (Choo & Halim, 2022). Targeted economic analysis research is essential to measure the constituent value of Indigenous tourism to analyze how possible revenues are fairly divided. The professionals will also have to devise mitigation measures that will enable them to effectively address global issues, for instance, pandemics or economic downturns, when evaluating the economic sustainability of Indigenous tourism initiatives (Sanip & Mustapha, 2020).

The participation of anthropologists, environmental scientists, economists and culture specialists from other fields will enhance the growth of an inter-disciplinary kind of approach towards Indigenous tourism. Indigenous people's participation in the formulation of research topics and approaches is particularly crucial owing to the primary consideration of Indigenous ways of knowing (Aisyah, 2023). Finally, future research may focus on an examination of the processes by which the policy recommendations resulting from this type of study are put into practice, as well as assess the utility and outcomes of those initiatives on Indigenous tourism. Understanding the factors that may hinder the policies' implementation and recommending ways to effectively improve the policies' approval by the governments and other stakeholders will help to adopt policies that will be efficient and beneficial for Indigenous people. As highlighted in the literature gaps above, future research focusing on these areas will enhance the understanding and improvement of Indigenous tourism for the future development of Indigenous people's culture in Malaysia and other parts of the world.

5. Conclusion

Overall, this paper is capable of providing a clear understanding of the complexity of culture, community participation, and sustainability in tourism activities for the Indigenous peoples in Malaysia. Thus, the present research underscores the concept and significance of culture and participation of the Indigenous people as vital ingredients to implement sustainable measures in tourism practices. Therefore, this study also points to the importance of the centering of the Indigenous paradigm to affirm and protect Indigenous peoples' sovereignty and cultural assets in tourism. It ensures that economic development does not compromise on cultural principles. This paper also confirms that; tourism plans, that respect cultural values and remain sensitive to the historical background of Indigenous people and artifacts are critical to achieving sustainable development.

As Indigenous tourism is entering the global sphere of attention the findings of this research contribute to understanding what policy improvements are necessary for Indigenous peoples, aiding in the development of effective recommendations and practices, and contributing to further Indigenous tourism research. Subsequently, population and cultural specifics related to Indigenous peoples can be one of the prerequisites for applying comprehensive strategies for sustainable Indigenous people's tourism. It is, therefore, the modest endeavor of this study to add its voice to the global discourse on sustainable tourism, especially given the fact that methods and approaches empowering the Indigenous knowledge, values and culture are imperative for sustainable development. Finally, this paper argues for the improvement of Indigenous tourists' treatment that

allows Indigenous populations to protect and promote Indigenous cultures and provide sustainable income-generating activities for Indigenous people. Instead, it embraces the need to fundamentally change the tourism development paradigms in such a way that Indigenous people's voices and experiences as custodians of vibrant cultures are accorded primacy and protection within the global tourism domain.

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