

An Appraisal of the Institutional Structure of Rural Tourism in Malaysia: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract: This conceptual paper seeks to examine the institutional obstacles that affect rural tourism in Malaysia. Identifying the government institutions involved in the planning and development of rural tourism is itself problematic. The jurisdictions of federal agencies and state agencies may overlap, thus resulting in haphazard planning and mismatched objectives. Studies on this area are limited and have become outmoded due to the shifting governmental landscape in the country. The jurisdictional boundaries of various institutions continue to change, thus causing a gap in the identification of responsible government agencies and their corresponding portfolios. An institutional appraisal of rural tourism in Malaysia is therefore necessary. In this regard, the effectiveness of governmental institutions should be evaluated in terms of (a) the promotion of environmentally sustainable rural tourism; (b) the protection of host community interests; and (c) facilitating the effective enforcement of laws and regulations pertaining to rural tourism. The conceptual framework facilitates the development of a responsible rural tourism institutional framework at local, state and national levels.

Keywords: *environmental protection, government institutions, host communities, Malaysia, rural tourism, sustainability*

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