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Lata Kinjang's Eco-Tourism Cooperative: A Community-Driven Venture

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The Orang Asli, or indigenous populations, are groups characterized by distinct linguistic, epistemological and belief systems. Indigenous communities frequently share numerous characteristics with other marginalized societal segments, including insufficient political representation and engagement, economic disenfranchisement and impoverishment, limited access to social services and systemic discrimination. Furthermore, there exists a demographic challenge within the community, which often contributes to the neglect of their health and the fulfilment of fundamental necessities, such as adequate clothing and nutritious sustenance for the entire family. In Malaysia, these Indigenous populations are not forsaken and are instead administered by the Department of Orang Asli Development - *Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli* (JAKOA). Among the initiatives to empower this community is by encouraging them to form cooperative which will lead to socio-economic development. This paper highlights achievement by Koperasi Orang Asli Lata Kinjang Berhad (KOALKB), a cooperative established in July 2021 that began operating Taman Eko Rimba Lata Kinjang (TERLK), Tapah, Perak, Malaysia in July 2022. This research endeavour aims to elucidate the mechanisms through which KOALKB has emerged as one of the preeminent cooperatives representing the Orang Asli community in Malaysia. Using a case study method, this paper highlights TERLK, covering its eco-tourism business model. Furthermore, it addresses KOALKB's commitment to human capital development, its challenges and future plans for the sustainability of this Orang Asli cooperative. Ultimately, this paper will provide lessons that could be learned by other cooperatives especially the indigenous community.

1. INTRODUCTION

Research on empowering Indigenous communities through cooperatives has emerged as a critical area of inquiry due to its potential to address socio-economic disparities and promote sustainable development within marginalized populations (Sengupta & Sengupta, 2015; Kurti et al., 2014). The evolution of this field reflects a growing recognition of Indigenous cooperatives as multifaceted entities that integrate economic, social, cultural, and environmental objectives (Sengupta & Sengupta, 2015; Vázquez-Maguirre, 2020).

Early studies emphasized cooperatives as tools for economic development, while more recent research highlights their role in cultural preservation and self-determination (Setiawan & Azizah, 2023; Hudson et al., 2022). The significance of this research is underscored by data indicating that Indigenous cooperatives contribute substantially to employment, income generation, and community well-being, yet face unique challenges related to governance, policy frameworks, and access to resources (Emana, 2009; Kurti et al., 2014).

Despite the acknowledged benefits, a persistent problem lies in understanding the complex factors that enable cooperatives to effectively empower Indigenous communities across diverse contexts (Sengupta & Sengupta, 2015; Giovannini, 2014). Existing literature reveals a knowledge gap concerning the interplay of social and cultural impacts, economic factors, policy and governance frameworks, and education and skill development in fostering cooperative success (Jolly, 1991; Alwiya, 2024). Controversies arise regarding the extent to which cooperatives align with Indigenous cultural values versus being co-opted by external economic or political agendas (Sengupta & Sengupta, 2015; Burke, 2010). Moreover, insufficient integration of Indigenous governance models and limited empirical evaluations of cooperative outcomes hinder the formulation of effective support mechanisms (Luturmas et al., 2024; Middleton & Kusel, 2007). This gap has significant consequences, as inadequate understanding may perpetuate dependency and limit the transformative potential of cooperatives (De Gruyter et al., 2024).

The conceptual framework guiding this study defines empowerment as the enhancement of Indigenous communities' capacities to exercise self-determination and achieve sustainable development (Soni et al., 2024; Hudson et al., 2022). Cooperatives are conceptualized as collective enterprises that embody Indigenous social values and economic objectives, operating within governance structures influenced by policy environments and cultural norms (Setiawan & Azizah, 2023). Education and skill development are positioned as critical enablers that strengthen cooperative governance and economic viability (Muhaimin et al., 2024). This integrated framework supports the examination of how these dimensions interact to facilitate community empowerment through cooperatives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section maps the research landscape of the literature on key factors contributing to empowering indigenous communities through cooperatives: social and cultural impacts, economic factors, policy and governance frameworks, and education and skill development. Many studies focus on the intersection of indigenous cultural preservation and economic development through cooperatives and social enterprises, highlighting the role of policy frameworks and education in fostering empowerment. This comparative analysis addresses the research questions by synthesizing evidence on social cohesion, economic viability, governance effectiveness, capacity building, and integration of traditional knowledge within indigenous cooperative models.

From the social and cultural impact, studies emphasize cooperatives as instruments for reinforcing indigenous identity, cultural preservation, and social cohesion, often integrating traditional knowledge and community values into cooperative practices (Sengupta & Sengupta, 2015; Setiawan & Azizah, 2023). The role of cooperatives in fostering social capital and collective responsibility is well documented, contributing to empowerment and community resilience (Alwiya, 2024). Studies by Durán-Díaz et al. (2020) and Rahma (2024) emphasized the role of cooperatives in empowering specific groups such as women, enhancing social roles and participation. Nevertheless, studies also highlighted challenges where cooperatives risked dependency or tokenistic cultural engagement, underscoring the need for genuine indigenous control (Burke, 2010).

Economically, cooperatives contribute positively by generating income, creating employment and enhancing market access, often supported by government policies and partnerships. Innovative

financial models that blend traditional economic philosophies with contemporary frameworks are emerging as critical enablers of cooperative sustainability. Research highlights the economic benefits of cooperatives, including job creation, income generation, and improved market access, often linked to sustainable development goals (Emana, 2009; Kurti et al., 2014). Nevertheless, persistent barriers such as limited access to capital (De Gruyter et al., 2024), infrastructural deficits, and regulatory challenges remain significant obstacles, with economic analyses often lacking longitudinal depth to fully ascertain sustainability. Barriers such as limited access to capital, infrastructure, and business skills persist, and some studies note the risk of dependency on external funding (Emana, 2009). Hence, financial inclusion and innovative financing models tailored to indigenous contexts are recognized as vital for cooperative success (De Gruyter et al., 2024).

Several works underscore the importance of supportive policy environments and indigenous governance structures that respect self-determination and traditional authority (Luturmas et al., 2024). The influence of external political economies and colonial histories complicates governance, sometimes undermining cooperative autonomy (Sengupta & Sengupta, 2015; Burke, 2010). However, the integration of indigenous governance with cooperative management is presented as a pathway to sustainable development and empowerment (Giovannini, 2014; Middleton & Kusel, 2007).

Education initiatives embedded within cooperatives, such as culturally relevant training and capacity building, are shown to enhance empowerment and economic participation (Muhaimin et al., 2024). Although Muhaimin et al. (2024) argue that educational interventions are often small-scale and lack systematic evaluation, limiting evidence of long-term impact. The literature recognizes the critical role of traditional knowledge systems in shaping cooperative models that align with indigenous worldviews, promoting sustainability and cultural continuity. Innovative frameworks that blend indigenous and Western principles offer promising pathways for enterprise development (Maclean et al., 2024).

In terms of community empowerment, evidence suggests that cooperatives contribute to increased self-determination, social inclusion, and improved well-being, particularly when governance is participatory and culturally grounded (Vázquez-Maguirre, 2020; Soni et al., 2024). Empowerment through cooperatives is linked to broader sustainable development goals and social justice aims (Bansal et al., 2023; Kurti et al., 2014). Nevertheless, outcomes are often context-specific and difficult to measure systematically. Some cooperatives risk reinforcing existing inequalities or becoming dependent on external actors (Burke, 2010; Rahma, 2024).

Overall, the literature underscores cooperatives as potent but complex mechanisms for indigenous empowerment, advocating for more robust, culturally attuned, and interdisciplinary research to deepen understanding and guide effective practice. Therefore, this study elucidate the mechanisms through which KOALKB has emerged as one of the preeminent cooperatives representing the Orang Asli community in Malaysia.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This investigation utilizes the purposive sampling technique (Merriam, 2009), with KOALKB identified as the analytical unit due to its alignment with the established criteria of the research objectives. That is for the flowchart in figure 1 :

1 Research Methodology Flowchart

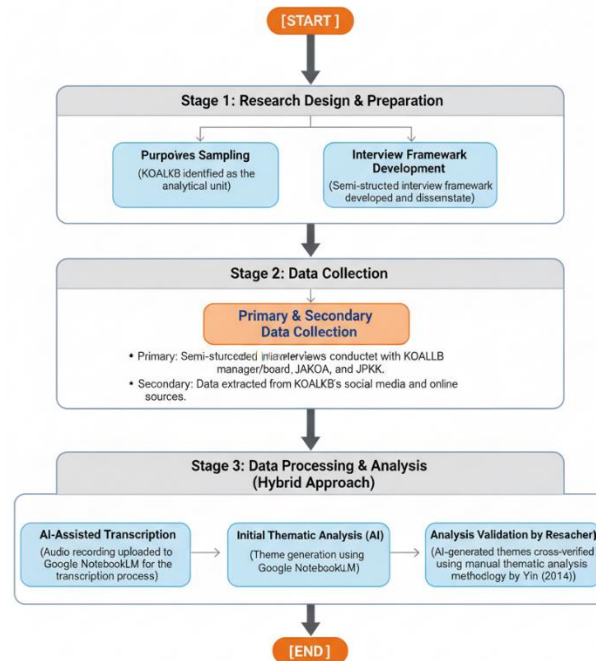


Figure 1. Flowchart for Research Method

Purposive sampling is widely regarded as an appropriate methodology for qualitative inquiries, emphasizing the comprehension of the lived experiences and viewpoints of individuals. A semi-structured interview framework was meticulously developed in advance and disseminated to the informants prior to the scheduled meeting. The interview session was conducted with the manager and board members of KOALKB. Input was also solicited from relevant stakeholders, including Department of Orang Asli Development - Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA) and Village Development and Security Committee - Jawatankuasa Pembangunan dan Keselamatan Kampung (JPKK). Furthermore, secondary data was extracted from KOALKB's social media platforms and various other online resources.

Upon the conclusion of the interview, the audio recording was subsequently uploaded to the GenAI platform known as Google NotebookLM to facilitate the transcription process, which further enabled the generation of themes pertinent to qualitative data analysis (QDA). The themes thus produced were meticulously cross verified utilizing the manual thematic analysis methodology proposed by Yin (2014). The incorporation of artificial intelligence into qualitative research has emerged as a transformative phenomenon, particularly within the domain of thematic analysis (Yan et al., 2023; Echeverría et al., 2024; Naeem et al., 2025; Nguyen-Trung, 2025). The findings articulated by Naeem et al. (2025) underscore the advantages of amalgamating GenAI with human analytical efforts, including enhanced data processing capabilities and improved theme identification, while concurrently addressing challenges such as the management of inconsistencies in GenAI outputs and the necessity for rigorous validation to uphold the integrity of research. This interdependent relationship highlights the critical role of human expertise in preserving interpretative depth while capitalizing on the efficiencies afforded by artificial intelligence tools. Tools such as ChatGPT exhibit limitations in contextual comprehension, which may result in misinterpretation of nuanced data. This inherent limitation underscores the essential requirement for human oversight to guarantee that themes are accurately captured and interpreted (Echeverría et al., 2024; Yan et al., 2023).

The integration of artificial intelligence into thematic analysis within qualitative research signifies a notable transformation in the methodologies employed by researchers in data analysis. While AI presents considerable advantages regarding efficiency, scalability and cost-effectiveness, it concurrently introduces challenges associated with trustworthiness, contextual comprehension and ethical implications. Therefore, adopting a collaborative framework will enable the optimization of the strengths inherent in both human researchers and AI tools.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the semi structured interview conducted with the manager and board members of KOALKB, and also from relevant stakeholders, including Department of Orang Asli Development and Village Development and Security Committee, several key themes emerged from the session and are highlighted below:

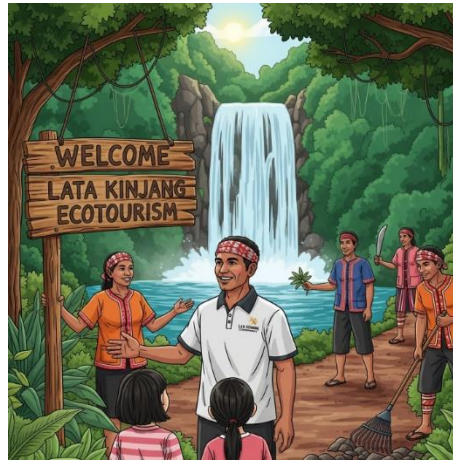


Figure 2. Illustrations Lata Kinjang

4.1 KOALKB: A Model for Orang Asli Empowerment and Ecotourism

KOALKB was established on 15th July 2021 and officially began operating TERLK on 29th July 2022, taking over management from the Forestry Department. According to the Cooperative Manager, this initiative is described as the first pilot project in Malaysia to assist the Orang Asli community, launched under the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri and Minister of Economy Datuk Seri Mustafa Mohamad. The cooperative aims to help the Orang Asli community achieve self-reliance and generate income. KOALKB is managed by Orang Asli members, with key positions like the Chairman and Secretary filled by them.

"The cooperative initially employed over 20 full-time staff members who receive full monthly salaries, which is noted as a unique achievement among cooperatives in Perak." - the Manager of TERLK

As of April 2025, KOALKB has 72 members, with 22 skilled and semi-skilled staff working in various capacities. The cooperative prioritises sharing its success with the local community through corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, such as distributing food boxes to those in need (asnaf, single mothers, elderly, OKU), and fostering economic growth by supporting local entrepreneurs.

KOALKB has received numerous accolades, including the "Best Cooperative Award for Hospitality in Perak" and appointment as a member of the Perak State Cooperative Consulting Council (MPKN Perak) for the 2025/2026 session. The chairman of KOALKB also received the "Orang Asli Icon of Perak" award.

4.2 Strategic Management and Partnerships for Sustainable Growth

The success of KOALKB is attributed to strong management and strategic collaborations. The cooperative has a structured management team, including a Head of Operations, an Administrative, Corporate Affairs & Human Resources Officer and a Finance Officer.

"Regular meetings, including monthly meetings with the Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA), JAKOA, and the cooperative chairman, are held to monitor progress. There are also quarterly task force meetings with CEOs, CFOs, and JAKOA directors to make key decisions regarding budget and future plans." – the Manager of TERLK

KOALKB benefits from extensive strategic partnerships with various government agencies, including JAKOA, MOTAC, Tourism Perak, Tourism Malaysia, the Tapah District and Land Office, and the Tapah District Council. These partnerships are crucial for promotions, training, and operational support.

"For instance, NCIA has provided significant funding (around RM 2 to 3 million) and support for training. Human capital development is a key focus, with external trainers brought in to provide courses on tourism, housekeeping, hiking, F&B, English language, and accounting. KOALKB also works closely with the police and fire department on safety and security measures." – the Manager of TERLK

This finding is supported by a study by Alwiyyasa (2024) that community cohesion and government support are crucial for sustainable and inclusive economic growth through education, training, and infrastructure development. This is also strongly agreed by Soni et al. (2024) that collaborative partnerships are identified as vital for promoting indigenous empowerment. These partnerships should involve indigenous groups, governments, civil societies and other stakeholders to effectively address the interconnected challenges faced by indigenous peoples.

4.3 Navigating Challenges in Ecotourism Operations

Despite its successes, KOALKB faces several challenges. One significant challenge is dealing with **natural factors** like heavy rain and headwaters, which can lead to temporary closures and increased operational costs due to damage and clean-up efforts. For example, a headwater incident in early 2024 significantly impacted income.

Operational limitations include limited parking space for vehicles, access to supplies being far from the location, and the high cost of waste disposal and maintenance. The cooperative also struggles with securing appropriate insurance coverage for high-risk ecotourism activities, particularly those involving the waterfall.

Market and financial pressures include managing visitor expectations for low prices, especially from local communities, despite the provision of quality facilities and services. While international visitors often find the prices reasonable, local visitors frequently comment on them being expensive. Maintaining financial stability and ensuring staff salaries are paid during off-seasons or unforeseen events (like the headwater incident) requires careful management and savings. There's also a challenge in engaging all 72 cooperative members actively, as some already have other jobs or lack confidence in the cooperative's potential.

Whilst KOALKB may not find financing as their main challenge, this is due to their strategic collaboration with many government agencies in receiving grants. This might be contradicted with De Gruyter et al. (2024) highlighting the persistent difficulties of Indigenous entrepreneurs face in accessing finance.

4.4 Future Vision: Diversification and Continued Development

KOALKB has ambitious future plans to ensure long-term sustainability and growth. These include developing **additional attractive packages**, constructing a new multi-purpose hall for events, and **diversifying its business ventures**.

"The cooperative plans to enter into retail, services, agro-tourism, and edu-tourism, aligning with permaculture concepts for environmental sustainability. This diversification is seen as crucial to avoid over-reliance on ecotourism, which is susceptible to natural disasters and seasonal fluctuations." – the Manager of TERLK

While there's a reluctance to take on loans, the management is exploring grants from agencies like JAKOA and the Veterinary Department for agricultural projects. There are also plans to upgrade and repair existing infrastructure and implement disaster planning and preparedness measures. The cooperative is exploring options like home-to-stay units and potentially other income streams such as paranormal tourism or integrating traditional Orang Asli medicine.

Nevertheless, KOALKB need to ensure their plan is wisely implemented to ensure a higher successful rate. This has been emphasized by research from Middleton and Kusel (2007) which highlights that successful economic development in Native American communities' hinges on culturally aligned, community-driven projects that serve multiple tribal objectives. It underscores the need to invest in tribal capital, leverage efficient tribal governance and foster external understanding of tribal distinctiveness.

4.5 Land Rights and Gazettement of Orang Asli Reserve

"The land on which TERLK operates is gazetted as an Orang Asli reserve, covering an area of 92.24 hectares in Batang Padang, Tapah, Perak. The management of this land, including the TERLK, is governed by an MOU between KOALKB and JAKOA, typically set for a five-year term. This arrangement ensures that the land status remains under Orang Asli control, with the cooperative acting as the operator." – Tok Batin @ Secretary of KOALKB.

Issues of previous management by the Forestry Department and concerns about equitable access and benefit distribution among kampung members were raised, highlighting the importance of the cooperative's role in ensuring community benefit.

This is in a similar vein with research in Indonesia by Laturmas et al. (2024) which suggests that to effectively protect the territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples, a more comprehensive legal and policy framework is essential.

4.6 Business Model Canvas (BMC) - KOALKB

The Business Model Canvas (BMC) (Figure 1) is a strategic visual tool used to plan, analyze, and innovate business models for business development (Ningsih et.al, 2023). It helps entrepreneurs, managers and organizations understand how value is offered to customers and how operations and finances are structured to support that value. Based on the analysis conducted on KOALKB, a BMC with the nine blocks namely, value proposition, key activities, key resources, cost structure, key partners, customer relationships, customer segments, channels and revenue streams (Murray & Scuotto, 2016) is proposed to ensure the sustainability of this cooperative. This BMC can also be adapted to other heritage houses according to their respective contexts. The explanation of BMC for KOALKB is as follows:-

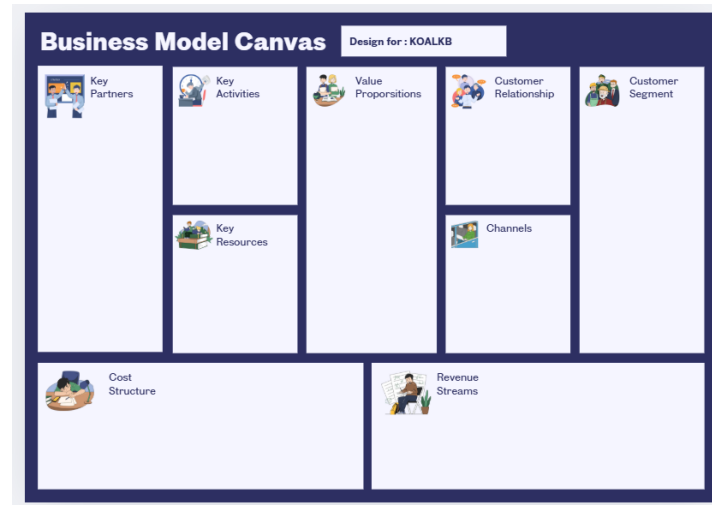


Figure 1: Business Model Canvas (BMC)

Business Model Canvas: Koperasi Orang Asli Lata Kinjang Berhad (KOALKB)

1. Customer Segments

KOALKB targets a diverse range of visitors and stakeholders:

- Domestic Tourists: The primary visitor group, with high numbers recorded.
- International Tourists: Although smaller in number, they are a target segment, often finding prices reasonable and appreciating cleanliness and safety.
- Hikers and Adventure Seekers: Specific groups who travel to TERLK for its hiking trails and natural environment.
- Families: Visitors seeking a natural, safe, and clean environment for recreation.
- Government Agencies & Corporations: Potential clients for events, team-building, or large group bookings (e.g., banks, insurance companies).

2. Value Propositions

KOALKB offers a multi-faceted value proposition to its customers and community:

- Unique Ecotourism Experience: Access to Taman Eko Rimba Lata Kinjang (TERLK), featuring a prominent waterfall, natural beauty, and outdoor activities like hiking and tube camping.
- High Standards of Cleanliness and Safety: A primary focus on maintaining clean facilities, including tube camps and bathrooms. Rigorous safety measures are in place, including 24-hour security, headwater alerts, and collaboration with police and fire departments, to ensure visitor safety.
- Accessible Facilities: Providing OKU-friendly infrastructure like dedicated parking, toilets, and available wheelchairs.
- Community Empowerment and Local Development: Being the first pilot project in Malaysia managed by the Orang Asli community for their self-reliance and income generation. It offers employment opportunities and supports local entrepreneurs, fostering economic growth within the community.
- Strategic and Professional Management: Operated by a structured management team with experienced personnel, ensuring efficient operations and sustainable growth.
- Cultural Preservation: Operating on gazetted Orang Asli reserve land, upholding their land rights and ensuring community benefit from the attraction.
- Future Diversification: Plans to offer agro-tourism and edu-tourism, embracing permaculture concepts for environmental sustainability.

3. Channels

KOALKB uses various channels to reach its customers and promote its offerings:

- a. Online Presence: Official website (www.tamanekorimbalatakinjang.com.my) and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok).
- b. Direct Sales: Ticket counters at TERLK for walk-in visitors.
- c. Promotional Materials: Brochures and flyers distributed at events and through partners.
- d. Tourism Fairs and Exhibitions: Active participation in national and state-level tourism and cooperative events (e.g., Hari Koperasi Negara, travel fairs).
- e. Strategic Partnerships: Leveraging government agencies like JAKOA, MOTAC, Tourism Perak, Tourism Malaysia, Pejabat Daerah and Tanah Tapah, and Majlis Daerah Tapah for wider promotion and reach.
- f. Word-of-Mouth: Positive international visitor reviews and experiences contribute to organic promotion.
- g. Commemorative Stamps: A unique stamp issue by Pos Malaysia featuring Lata Kinjang as a collectible item.

4. Customer Relationships

KOALKB builds relationships through a mix of direct interaction, community engagement, and responsiveness:

- a. Direct Engagement: Staff interaction with visitors at the entrance, facilities, and through direct feedback.
- b. Community Welfare: Implementing Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives like distributing food boxes to vulnerable groups, demonstrating commitment to local welfare.

5. Revenue Streams

KOALKB generates revenue primarily from its ecotourism operations and grants:

- a. Entrance Fees: Charges for adults, children, seniors, and international visitors for entry to TERLK and the gallery.
- b. Parking Fees: Revenue from car and motorcycle parking.
- c. Rental Services: Income from renting tube camps, campsites, chairs, and floats.
- d. Retail and F&B: Sales from warungs, handicraft shops, and general stores within TERLK.
- e. Activity Fees: Generated from activities such as mountain climbing/hiking.
- f. Event Management: Fees for managing events, video, or film shoots within TERLK.
- g. Grants and Funding: Significant initial funding from NCIA (approx. RM2-3 million). Ongoing grants from JAKOA (up to RM25,000 for cooperatives), and potential future grants from the Veterinary Department (e.g., livestock for agro-tourism).
- h. Cooperative Share Capital: Members contribute RM100 per share, with high dividend payouts (120-130%) encouraging further investment.
- i. Future Diversification: Planned revenue streams from retail, services, agro-tourism, and edu-tourism ventures.

6. Key Resources

KOALKB's operations rely on several critical resources:

- a. Physical Assets:
 1. Taman Eko Rimba Lata Kinjang (TERLK): The core natural attraction with its waterfall, rivers, and jungle.
 2. Gazetted Orang Asli Reserve Land: The 92.24-hectare land on which TERLK operates, securing the cooperative's long-term access and control.
 3. Facilities & Infrastructure: Interpretation building, ticket counters, parking lots (120 car, 200 motorcycle bays), tube camps, campsites, galleries, gazebos,

warungs, handicraft shops, observation deck, suspension bridge, and a waste house.

- b. Human Capital:
 - 1. Skilled Management Team
 - 2. Workforce: 22 full-time skilled and semi-skilled staff, including security, handymen, gardeners, warung/shop staff, cleaners, tube camp/housekeeping staff, ticketing staff, and mountain guides.
 - 3. Cooperative Members: 72 members, mostly local Orang Asli villagers, forming the ownership base.
- c. Intellectual and Knowledge-based:
 - 1. Tourism Expertise: The Head of Operations extensive experience as an industry expert and trainer in tourism, F&B, housekeeping, and homestay development.
 - 2. Cooperative Management Expertise: Knowledge and experience in managing a cooperative, particularly within the Orang Asli context.

7. Key Activities

KOALKB undertakes a range of activities to deliver its value propositions:

- a. Ecotourism Operations: Managing the day-to-day operations of TERLK, including ticketing, facility maintenance, and ensuring visitor experience.
- b. Safety & Security Protocols: Implementing and monitoring 24-hour security, water safety (headwater alerts, rescue plans), fire safety (fire extinguishers, CPR training), and health inspections (rat urine prevention).
- c. Human Capital Development: Providing training and capacity building for staff and community members in areas like tourism, housekeeping, hiking, F&B, English language, and accounting, often with support from partners like NCIA.
- d. Marketing and Promotion: Developing and disseminating promotional materials (brochures, social media content), participating in travel fairs and exhibitions, and collaborating with tourism agencies to attract visitors.
- e. Infrastructure Maintenance: Regular cleaning, waste management (using external contractors), and planned upgrades and repairs to existing facilities.

8. Key Partnerships

KOALKB's success is heavily reliant on a strong network of partners:

- a. Government Agencies:
 - 1. Jabatan Kemajuan Orang Asli (JAKOA): Key partner for policy, land management (MOU), grants, and initial setup support.
 - 2. Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA): Provided initial substantial funding and training support, playing a crucial role in KOALKB's establishment and human capital development
 - 3. Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC) & Tourism Agencies: Collaboration with Tourism Perak, Tourism Malaysia, Pejabat Daerah & Tanah Tapah, and Majlis Daerah Tapah for promotion, strategic planning, and accreditation
 - 4. Co-operative Commission of Malaysia (SKM): Supports the cooperative, provides training, and offers recognition (e.g., Best Cooperative Award)
 - 5. Security & Health Agencies: Close collaboration with Royal Malaysia Police, Fire and Rescue Department, and Health Department for safety, emergency response, and health inspections
 - 6. Local Community: The Orang Asli community of Lata Kinjang, including village committees (JPKK) and local entrepreneurs, are integral stakeholders and beneficiaries
 - 7. Other Cooperatives: Collaboration and benchmarking with other successful cooperatives, like Koperasi Wanita Orang Asli Sai Tapah.

9. Cost Structure

The primary costs for KOALKB include:

- a. Staff Costs: Full-time staff salaries, KWSP (EPF), SOCSO, and HRDF contributions.
- b. Operational Expenses: High costs associated with waste disposal and site maintenance. Also, general supplies and utility costs.
- c. Infrastructure & Maintenance: Costs for regular repairs, upgrades, and large purchases like CCTV systems (e.g., RM30,000+ in 2024).
- d. Insurance: Difficulty in securing appropriate insurance coverage for high-risk ecotourism activities, particularly those involving the waterfall, indicating potentially high costs if secured.
- e. Marketing and Promotion: Expenses for brochures, banners, social media marketing, and participation fees for travel fairs and exhibitions.
- f. Training & Development: While many training programs are sponsored by partners, some may incur costs or require internal resource allocation.
- g. Unexpected Costs: Significant expenditures incurred due to natural disasters like headwater incidents, leading to temporary closures, damage, and clean-up efforts.
- h. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Costs associated with community outreach, such as food box distribution.

This BMC highlights KOALKB's integrated approach, balancing commercial success with community empowerment and sustainable practices, while also identifying the key challenges they face, particularly concerning natural factors and financial sustainability without relying on loans.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, KOALKB's journey is a compelling case study in community empowerment and sustainable development through tourism. Its success, evidenced by its significant achievements and recognition, is deeply rooted in its adherence to eco-tourism business models and proactive community development strategies. While navigating challenges inherent to its environmental context and operational scale, its effective leveraging of unique resources and robust stakeholder collaborations are pivotal to its current standing and future aspirations for diversification and continued growth as a model for Orang Asli cooperatives in Malaysia.

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