

**ECONOMIC GAINS OVER TRADITIONAL VALUES: TOURISM IMPACT FROM
THE VIEWPOINT OF HOST COMMUNITY**

By

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ABSTRACT

One of the attractive features of tourism is the economic benefits that come with it. Many past literatures have documented how tourism significantly plays roles in contributing nation's economic growth and bettering host community financial circumstances through job creations. Recent proposition put forward was in regard to measuring tourism impact by taking the host community perception into consideration. It is argued that if the host community's overall life satisfaction indicates positive views in regards to tourism activities, then tourism policies and programs should be formulated to influence community's positive perception in regard to their wellbeing. For this, the study examines tourism impact from the perspective of host community in regards to economic, environmental and social aspects. Based on a sample of 285 respondents from host community at Perhentian Island in Terengganu Malaysia, it was found that the locals positively perceived tourism activities from all three aspects. However, from observations and interviews with several prominent individuals in the community, it was found that the locals have strayed from several aspects of traditional values as a result of tourism activities. Therefore, the paper highlights on the results of host community perceptions towards tourism impact and discussed the issues of threats to traditional values.

Keyword: *Tourism impact, host community perception and traditional values.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

One of the main contributions expected from tourism activity is economic gains, not only for the nation but also to the host community. Tourism Malaysia (Tourism Malaysia, 2012) has reported about MYR 60.6 billion (USD 20.25 billion) in tourism receipt. WTO (2013) has ranked Malaysia as top ten for international arrival in 2012 with total international tourists amounted 25.0 million. Other than that, tourism industry is also anticipated to improve the community's infrastructure and enhance their quality of life (Presenza, Del Chiappa, & Sheehan, 2013). However, it is important to gain understanding on the locals' perception and acceptance between the trade-off of economic benefits (income, job creation, infrastructure, and on-going development) and unfavorable tourism impact. This is because past literatures have long documented both positive and negative impact of tourism on the host community.

These studies are important in order to understand how individuals in host community as well as host community overall perceive the benefits and disadvantages of tourism at their vicinity (Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2012). It is also essential in order to determine types of tourism impact experienced by the local community (Brougham & Butler, 1981; Deery et al., 2012; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996). Therefore, this paper presents the outcomes of a research conducted at Perhentian Islands, Terengganu Malaysia in regards to host community perceptions towards tourism impact.

Malaysia and Perhentian Island

Located at South East Asia, Malaysia consists of eleven states in Peninsular Malaysia and two states in Borneo Island (East Malaysia). Covering an area about 330,803 square kilometers and lies entirely in the equatorial zone, the average daily temperature varies from 21°C to 32°C. Blessed with having long coastlines that stretch about 2,068 km in Peninsular

Malaysia and about 2,607 km coastline in East Malaysia, it gives a total of 4,675 km coastlines that offers countless of stunning sandy beaches all over Malaysia. Apart from the enchanting beaches, Malaysia also owns hundreds of beautiful islands. Among popular islands that attract not only locals but international as well are Langkawi Island, Redang Island, Tioman Island, Perhentian Island and Sipadan Island, just to name a few.

Figure 1: Map of Malaysia showing the location of Perhentian Island.



Maps of Perhentian Island (<http://divezone.net/travel/perenthians-islands>)

Perhentian Islands is located at northeastern coast of Terangganu state (one of 14 states that form Malaysia). The islands can be accessed by the tourist through Kuala Besut Jetty. Kuala Besut is a small town in north Terangganu State and the only entry point where tourist have to pay marine park conservation fee and required to fill in their particulars in a form for documentation purposes. Tourists have to take a boat for about forty five minutes journey to either Perhentian Besar or Perhentian Kecil. Like several other tourism islands in Malaysia, Perhentian Islands are mostly famous for its snorkeling, relaxing, sun bathing and scuba diving activities. Due to the islands beautiful beaches with turquoise water and splendor

sighting of underwater sea creatures and corals, Perhentian Island was ranked at number thirteen as “World’s Best Beaches” by CNN.COM (CNN, 2013) with the highlight like “*The blue waters off Pulau Perhentian Kecil invariably contain turtles and small sharks*” and “*Malaysia's Perhentian Islands are to beach bums what Kobe beef is to carnivores; once you've experienced it, nothing else quite matches up*” (CNN, 2013).

One feature of Perhentian Islands that sets apart from other Malaysian’s islands is the wide ranging vacation characteristics to suit various types of tourists. The islands offer two sides of styles such as from backpackers to luxury, loud partying to solitude atmosphere and from living with the community to being disengage from society. The two islands have been focusing different types of tourists. Perhentian Kecil is a backpacker-happy place whereas Perhentian Besar is for tourists who enjoy tranquility, peaceful and beautiful beaches. Perhentian Besar is slightly expensive compared to Perhentian Kecil due to types of accommodation and tourists’ characteristic.

Figure 2: Perhentian Kecil’s Long Beach



Figure 2: Map of Perhentian island

(source: http://www.dmpm.nre.gov.my/ptl_terengganu.html?uweb=jtl)



Perhentian Islands have generated economic wealth, employment, and business opportunities to the native islanders and outsiders. However, there are limited studies in regard to social impact towards local people from tourism activities (Mohamed, 2006; Sharma et al., 2008). Therefore, the paper highlights on the results of tourism impact from the viewpoint of host community and discussed the issues of threats to traditional values.

2.0 Literature Review

Tourism studies have long examined how local residents perceived tourism activities within their vicinity. As a result, these studies have found several characteristics that might influence the resident's perception towards tourism impact (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Gilbert & Clark, 1997; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; King, Pizam, & Milman, 1993; Liu, Sheldon, & Var, 1987; Liu & Var, 1986; Tatoglu, Erdal, Ozgur, & Azakli, 2002; Var, Kendall, & Tarakcioglu, 1985) and residents' attitudes towards tourism development (Akis, Peristianis, & Warner, 1996; Oviedo-Garcia, Castellanos-Verdugo, & Martin-Ruiz, 2008; Presenza et al., 2013; Raymond & Brown, 2007). At the same time, there are also studies that developed theories and models in predicting future outcomes by scrutinizing relationship between residents' attitudes and tourism activities (Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Nyaupane, Teye, & Paris, 2008; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990; Pérez & Nadal, 2005; Vargas-Sánchez, Porras-Bueno, & Plaza-Mejía, 2011).

This study falls within the first group which is to examine the residents' perceptions in regards to tourism impact. There are wide ranges of studies (according to periods and geographical locations) documented various aspects of tourism impact. For example, earlier studies have found that residents tend to positively perceive some negative impacts for the exchange of economics benefit from tourism. One of the findings from Var, Kendall & Tarakcioglu (1985) revealed that residents accepted the trade-off between inconveniences of tourism activity with *tourist moneys*. While, Liu & Var (1986) recorded that 73% of the respondents (residents), perceived economic gains as rising above the negative social impact of tourism.

More recent studies also highlights on residents' perception of tourism impacts. These impacts can be observed from three dimensions which are economics, social/cultural and natural environments. Most literatures documented favorable perceptions from residents in regards to economics impact from tourism industry. Studies by Oviedo-Garcia et al. (2008), Pérez and Nadal (2005), Tatoglu et al. (2002) are among that recorded positive perceptions from residents in regards to economics benefit of tourism. Furthermore, Kim, Uysal, and Sirgy (2013) found that positive perceptions of economic impact of tourism activity significantly influenced sense of material well-being; whereas, the latter influenced life satisfaction.

Social and cultural impact studies on the other hand, accumulate extensive findings which some recorded positive, while others document negative perceptions from residents. For examples, following theory of social conflict, Yang, Ryan, and Zhang (2013) put forward four parts model of social conflicts due to tourism, while Tovar and Lockwood (2008) examined the extent of tourism activity associated with protected areas contribute to social impact. On a different note, even though study by Sharma, Dyer, Carter, and Gursoy (2008) supported negative impact of tourism, it was found that residents positively perceived socializing or meeting with tourists from other countries as providing opportunity for them to learn other cultures.

As for environmental impacts, most current studies employed different approaches in measuring the impact. Estimating carbon footprint (Can & Hongbing, 2011; Dwyer, Forsyth, Spurr, & Hoque, 2010; Filimonau, Dickinson, Robbins, & Huijbregts, 2011; Liqin, 2011; Munday, Turner, & Jones, 2013) or ecological footprint of tourism (Castellani & Sala, 2012; Huiqin & Linchun, 2011; Rendeiro Martín-Cejas & Pablo Ramírez Sánchez, 2010) and

assessing carrying capacity of tourism sites (Pazienza, 2004; Salerno et al., 2013; Zhong, Deng, Song, & Ding, 2011) are among methods used to evaluate damages done to the environments as a result of tourism activities. There are however, studies that evaluate impact to natural environments from residents' perceptions. These studies would usually include the other two dimensions (economics and social). Consequently, this paper presents findings in regards to all three dimensions of tourism impact of Perhentian Island Terengganu, Malaysia.

3.0 Methodology

The study was conducted from May 2013 to August 2013 at Kuala Besut and Perhentian Island (the two island – Perhentian Besar and Perhentian Kecil). Data is gathered through questionnaire-guided interviews. Sample is selected from local people (native and non-native) who resided at Kuala Besut and Perhentian Islands (Pulau Perhentian Besar and Pulau Perhentian Kecil). Face-to-face interview was applied to ensure questions were answered by respondents where they were selected randomly during sampling period.

The questionnaire was prepared in native language, Malay Language and distributed by research assistants to local residents within the vicinity of Kuala Besut and Perhentian Island. They were chosen as samples due to direct exposure from tourism activities. The questionnaires are adapted from survey questionnaire by Scoullos (2004), consisting three sections; section A: General Information about respondent, section B: benefits of tourism to the environment, and section C: Contributions of tourism industry to the island. Likert's Scale of five is used to indicate respondent opinions for questions in section B and section C with scale one as "strongly do not agree" and five being "strongly agree". A pilot study was conducted prior the actual survey to verified the validity of the questionnaire used ($\alpha= 0.796$; N of items 36). The result of the survey was analysed using SPSS Version 21.0.

4.0 Result and Discussion

Data was collected from 27 May 2013 to 28th August 2013 at Kuala Besut and Perhentian Islands. The survey was conducted in Kuala Besut's Jetty, the entry point for tourists to Perhentian Islands. The local residents provide tourists with services such as boat services for island hopping activities and some act as tourist agents, hotel operators, shops (souvenirs and eateries) etc. In the island, survey had been conducted in Perhentian Kecil Village (the only local village in both island), and four most popular beaches in the islands which are Long Island Beach, Coral Bay, Teluk Dalam and Teluk Pauh.

Two hundred and eighty five (285) questionnaires were returned by respondents with complete answers. Respondents comprised of 147 (51.6%) males and 138 (48.4%) females. Results also indicate that 67.0% (191) of respondents were native of Kuala Besut or Perhentian Island and 20.7% (94 respondents) were non-native. Most resided at the island due to matrimonial, business opportunities, employment opportunities and other reasons. As shown in Table 1, 0.4% of respondents have post graduate degree, 11.2% of the respondents have a university degree, 16.5% diploma holder, 9.1% have High School certificate, 43.2% with Secondary School Certificate and 19.6% with lower secondary school certificate or primary school certificate.

Table 1: Respondent's Education Level

Level of Education	Frequency	Percent (%)
Post Graduate	1	0.4
Degree	32	11.2
Diploma	47	16.5
High School Certificate	26	9.1
Upper Secondary School Certificate	123	43.2
Lower Secondary School or Primary School	56	19.6
Total	285	100.0

4.1 Social Impact

The result of the study revealed that locals perceive that tourism on their island have created positive impacts social-wise (Mean Score = 4.52). The highest score was “tourism make this island popular” ($\bar{x} = 4.52$) the lowest Mean ($\bar{x} = 4.01$) for positive social impact section was “basic needs is battered due to tourism industries in the island”. Result shows that the locals feel that tourism has contributed positives outcomes to Perhentian Island where it is highlighted that locals do not agree that tourism is not benefiting them. They strongly agree that tourism has contributed to better infrastructures and facilities provided by the government and local authorities ($\bar{x} = 4.18$). Locals assumed that their islands are known to the world and very popular holiday destination and thus giving them opportunities meeting with international tourists ($\bar{x} = 4.25$). Tourism also help locals knowledge and experiences about international communities ($\bar{x} = 4.11$).

On the other hand, locals resident in Perhentian Island perceived tourism activities did not really affected them in negative way (Mean Score = 2.70). Local observed that they do not feel left behind or out-cast by the tourism industry in the island ($\bar{x} = 2.18$). Furthermore, tourism did not cause crowdedness in the island ($\bar{x} = 2.53$), and tourism do not lead to involuntary movement of local residents away from the islands ($\bar{x} = 2.23$).

The result indicated that, there is only a slight dissatisfaction in regard to the interference of tourists which may create social problems to local residents ($\bar{x} = 3.08$). The locals also show a quite low degree of concern about the increase of criminal ($\bar{x} = 2.80$) and the shift in morals and traditions value (Islamic to western) due to tourism activities among locals ($\bar{x} = 3.39$). Tourism also less likely creates any tension between locals and visitors ($\bar{x} = 2.96$). Overall results show that local residents were less concerned about social problem that occurred attributable to tourism activities in the island (min score = 2.70).

Through observations and casual conversation with local elders, several tourists' operators and parents, there are great deal of concerned about tourism exposure to youth and how it quite significantly influenced their attitude. There are evident that they have strayed away from local and tradition values and started adopting "beach boy" culture (which considered as conflicting value to the local culture) and involves in negative activities such as drugs and alcohol addiction. As for moral values, it is observed that they are several local youths who have body piercing, partying at the beach at night, taking alcohol and drugs openly at the beach while partying with tourists (extremely unacceptable in terms of religious and cultural value). Due to this, it is highly anticipated that religious and traditional value may decline due to tourism activities in the future.

Table 2: Social impacts

Positive Social Impact		N	Mean	S.D.
1	Tourism makes this island popular.	285	4.52	0.744
2	Tourism has increase the image of local residents.	285	4.28	0.863
3	Tourism helps to better the infrastructure and facilities in the island.	285	4.18	0.860
4	Tourism increases people knowledge and experiences of one another.	285	4.11	0.919
6	Basic needs is battered due to tourism industries in this island	285	4.01	0.822
7	Tourism opens opportunities for me to meet international communities.	285	4.25	0.841
Mean Score			4.23	
Negative Social Impact		N	Mean	S.D
1	In my opinion, tourism leads to local people feels left behind and out casted.	285	2.18	1.187
2	Tourism do not benefits local people	285	2.41	1.130
3	Tourism creates tension and conflict amongst locals and visitors.	285	2.96	1.165
4	Tourism creates social problem to local residents due to interference of visitors.	285	3.08	1.259
5	Tourism causes crowded in the island	285	2.53	1.099
6	Tourism leads to involuntarily movement of local residents.	285	2.23	1.108
7	Tourism contributes to the increase of criminality	285	2.80	1.140
8	Tourism contributes to the change of morals and traditions.	285	3.39	1.141
Mean Score			2.70	

N=285 Note: Based on Likert's Scale (1= strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree)

4.2 Economic Impact

Respondents' feedback on economic impacts of tourism industry in Perhentian Island is as shown in table 3. The result shows that tourism has given economics gain to the locals. Local residents perceived that tourism has solves economic problems in the island ($\bar{x} = 3.80$). Furthermore, tourism is perceive contributing wealth ($\bar{x} = 4.21$), and create a lot of employment opportunities among locals in the islands ($\bar{x} = 4.23$). Respondents also agreed that tourism industries have increased their standards of living positively ($\bar{x} = 4.07$).

On the other hand, tourism also gave economics impacts on land values (the surveys showed the locals agree that tourism has caused the increase of land value ($\bar{x} = 3.80$). Interestingly, the locals did not seem to perceive that tourism cause unbalance economic situation to the local residents ($\bar{x} = 2.19$). Interestingly, inflation distress is not affecting local residents ($\bar{x} = 2.48$). The result might suggest that due to the nature of the island itself where local residents live in an "isolated" village from visitor areas. Because of the locals has been "isolated" from the visitors, the inflation is not felt by the locals. Finally, economic activities related to tourism such as developing the island rapidly, increasing number of visitors and increase number of accommodation offered may conflict with environmental concern in the island ($\bar{x} = 2.96$).

Table 3: Economic impacts

Opinion on Economic Impact (positive impact)		N	Mean	S.D
1	Tourism have solves economic problems in this island.	285	3.80	1.011
2	Tourism has contributed wealth to the island.	285	4.21	0.812
3	Tourism has created a lot of employment opportunities in the island	285	4.23	0.880
4	Tourism opens opportunities to upgrade my standard of living.	285	4.07	0.825
5	Tourism creates unbalance economic situation.	285	2.19	1.122
6	Tourism creates inflation stress.	285	2.48	1.223
7	Tourism increases the cost of land	285	3.80	1.183
8	In my opinion, tourism causing a conflict between economy and environment in the island.	285	2.96	1.165

N=285 Note: Based on Likert's Scale (1= strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree)

4.3 Environmental Impact

Environmental issues due to tourism activities on the islands have become quite a concern matter to the locals. Scores resulted from data analysed from the survey showed that local residents merely agreed with the statement related to environmental given in the survey instrument. The result is shown in table 4. Local residents moderately agreed that tourism helps conservation and rehabilitation programmes in the island ($\bar{x} = 3.64$) where tourism industry was recognized as one of the reasons for private sectors contribute incentives for environmental friendly actions ($\bar{x} = 3.74$). At the same time, it is perceived that tourism may create slight advantages for the authorities to introduce protected area for environment protection activities ($\bar{x} = 3.94$). Awareness among locals and visitors on environmental degradation and loss of species were increase as a result of tourism activities on the island ($\bar{x} = 4.09$).

Result also shown that respondents disagreed that tourism may cause permanent loss of natural environment ($\bar{x} = 2.63$) and lead to environmental pollution ($\bar{x} = 2.39$). There is just a slight concern related to waste loads ($\bar{x} = 2.80$) and exploitations of natural resources ($\bar{x} = 2.62$) by tourism industry. Respondents also agree that tourism do not disturbs natural ecosystems and contributes to the loss of species($\bar{x} = 2.59$). They also felt that tourism cannot be blamed for the destruction of the islands' aesthetic landscapes ($\bar{x} = 3.53$).

The results may suggest that local residents have no issues with environment deterioration caused by tourism activities in Perhentian Islands. However, from the observation at Pulau Perhentian Kecil, there seems to be issues in regard to environmental degradations elements such as poor sewage and drainage systems on the island. There is one building (consisting backpackers hostels and shops) where stagnant water is trapped under the building causing

sore eye views and bad odour to the surrounding area. This may deteriorate the environment and affect tourist experience in negative way. Besides, there are articles reporting that the environment of Perhentian Island is deteriorating due to tourism (Brackenbury, 2002; Coates, 2005).

Table 4: Environmental Impact

	Opinion on Environmental – environmental-wise	N	Mean	S.D.
1	Tourism helps preserve the natural environment through conservation and rehabilitation programmes.	285	3.64	1.051
2	Tourism provides financial incentives for private sector, for environmental friendly actions.	285	3.74	0.970
3	Tourism creates advantages to create protected areas for environmental conservation.	285	3.94	0.931
4	Tourism creates a healthy competition among tourism islands in Malaysia related to environmental protection activities.	285	4.03	0.843
5	Tourism contributes to the increase of tourists and local residents' awareness on environmental degradation and loss species.	285	4.09	0.851
6	Tourist do not disturb the island environment	285	3.41	1.131
7	Tourism has benefited conservation activities in the islands	285	3.80	1.011
8	Tourism leads to the permanent loss of natural environment	285	2.63	1.166
9	Tourism leads to environmental pollution	285	2.39	1.126
10	Tourism leads to increases waste loads from the island.	285	2.80	1.157
11	Tourism leads to over exploitations of natural resources	285	2.62	1.123
12	Tourism disturbs natural ecosystems and contributes to the loss of species.	285	2.59	1.220
13	Tourism destroy the islands' aesthetic landscapes	285	2.53	1.197

N=285 Note: Based on Likert's Scale (1= strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree)

5.0 Conclusion

The study indicates that local residents perceived positive impact socially, economically and environmentally related to tourism activities in Perhentian Island. It was revealed that local communities in Perhentian Island are very positively overwhelmed with tourism activities on their island. However, through observations and casual conversation, they acknowledged serious problem in regards to social and environmental impact from tourism. Even though there are changes of moral and tradition values due to tourism activities, the authors believed

that local residents have mitigated the social and environmental impact in favor of economic contribution to the island. Consequently, more studies are proposed to be conducted in understanding how tourism might impact the islands socially, economically and environmentally in various dimensions. Those studies will provide more information to the authorities and decision makers to develop policies that can ensure the islands sustainability for locals' communities and tourism industries.

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