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## Local Community Attitude and Support towards Tourism Development in Tioman Island, Malaysia

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### Abstract

Tourism development is a double-edged sword for local communities and attitude directly affects the current and future tourism industry development. Community positive attitudes will encourage tourists' satisfaction levels and contributes to the word-of-mouth promotion among them. Therefore, the involvement and the participation of the host community are pertinent towards the success of the tourism development plan. The findings of the study indicated that the Tioman Island community supported future tourism development based on the personal benefit they received. It is a clear statement that the role of the residence is necessary to support tourism development and maintain its robust growth.

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*Keywords:* Development,; attitude; personal benefit; perceived impact; future support

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### 1. Introduction

The tourism industry faced a rapid growth with holistic support from local communities who involved directly and indirectly in this industry. Tourism acknowledged as one of the major attributes for cultural and economic today and its offer the opportunity to the local communities. The growth of the tourism industry is crucial to the economic growth as well as the related field such as transportation, leisure services and hospitality (Telfer, 2002). On the other hand, tourism also becomes the symbol to support the communities especially in changing the economics atmosphere. This is because the ability of the tourism industry to generate income, currency exchanges as well as provides the employment opportunity

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(Hanafiah, Harun & Jamaludin, 2010). The rapid growth in the tourism industry will certainly transform the tourist destination spot, but with unplanned tourism development, it could lead to environmental degradation and socio-economic disparity amongst the local community.

Local residents are the main stakeholders of tourism developments. Currently, the number of studies on local community attitudes towards future tourism development is increasing due to the nexus between community support and government future development. However, limited research embarked on the roles of personal benefit on residents' support towards future tourism development (Angelkova, Koteski, Jakovlev & Mitrevska, 2011). Jafari (2001) suggested that tourism development research should consider the roles of perceived benefit on tourism planning and development. Thus, this paper look into the personal benefit that local community gain from tourism development and how did they perceive the development impact as well as their support towards future development.

## **2. Residents' perceptions**

Local community support for tourism is necessary to ensure the commercial, socio-cultural, physiological, political and economic sustainability of the industry. Their role in influencing the tourism development activities through working together with the government is vital (Jamaludin, Othman & Awang, 2009). Furthermore, Cottrell & Vaske (2006) argued that the perception of the local residents was the most accurate factor in evaluating the current situation towards the destination due to the closeness of the area. However, the findings of those studies have produced inconsistent results. Therefore, it is essential to promote positive perceptions among local residents as this affects their support on tourism development. Most of the tourism literatures suggest that local residents' perception of tourism impact varied based on their perception on the benefit generated from the development (Dyer, Aberdeen & Schuler, 2007).

Residents' perception of social and cultural impacts of tourism development researched extensively. However, tourism development generates crucial consequences that may affect the respectful area. Besides delivering positive impacts such as enhancing local economies, being a source of new employment opportunities, additional tax receipts, foreign exchange earnings and income, tourism development have the potential towards negative outcomes (Ko & Steward, 2002). Some residents expected to perceive tourism as having negative social and cultural impacts and some inclined to see tourism as having positive economic, social and cultural impacts. This notion then reinforced by Harrison (2001) on the role of personal benefit that local community obtained from tourism development may commute adverse and positive perception on tourism development.

The affiliation between residents' attitudes and level of tourism development was researched thoroughly by numerous scholars. Allen et. al. (1993) found that residents' perception of tourism impact will be less positive as level of tourism in the community increased. Further, Perdue, Long & Allen (1993) also summarized that residents' initial attitudes towards tourism were enthusiastic, but as the cost outweighed the benefit of tourism development, attitudes achieve a threshold after which residents support for tourism declined. Meanwhile, Wang & Pfister (2008) conducted a research on the impact of personal benefit obtained from tourism development, and they discovered that, benefit and cost assumed to be more carefully evaluated and as benefits exceed the cost, the residents' will be more supportive on tourism development. When the cost exceeds the benefit, residents' tend to be more negative toward tourism development.

The significant role plays by the personal benefit from tourism development, especially the implicit social values in the process of exchange for residents' favourable attitudes towards tourism development. In addition, Jurowski, Uysal & William (1997) found out when the residents' did not enjoy any direct economic benefit from tourism, the residents will be neutral. In line with that, Allen et. al. (1993) argued

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