The Influences of Community Attachment on Residents’ Perceptions Towards Lenggong Valley’s Designation as the UNESCO World Heritage Site

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Abstract: Although there is a wealth of literature concerning residents’ perceptions towards tourism, yet very little research has been conducted in the case of World Heritage Sites (WHS). In addition to that, existing studies were also in disagreement about the role of community attachment on residents’ perceptions. Therefore, the purpose of this research, was to explore residents’ perceptions towards the designation of Lenggong Valley as WHS and its association with community attachment. The data were collected using self-administered survey targeting households who live in Lenggong district. The data was then treated with statistical analysis including simple regression, t-test and ANOVA techniques. The outcomes of the study indicated that, residents’ perceptions towards WHS can be divided into two dimensions, namely perceived benefits and perceived costs. In general, local residents were found to perceive the designation of Lenggong Valley as WHS in a positive manner. On top of that, community attachment was also found to positively influence residents’ perceptions towards WHS. Further analysis also indicated that several socio-demographic variables, e.g. place of birth and length of residency play an important role in determining strength of community attachment amongst the local residents.

Key words: Community Attachment - Residents’ Perceptions - World Heritage Sites

INTRODUCTION

Although there were many studies examining residents’ perceptions towards tourism development, but very few studies were conducted in the context of World Heritage Sites (WHS). In addition to that, previous studies examining the influences of community attachment on perceptions towards tourism development have been inconclusive due to many conflicting results found in the literature [1-7]. Scholars also suggested that community attachment play an important role in shaping favourable attitudes and behaviour towards the preservation of community and place characteristics, thus leading to commitment for sustainable tourism development [8, 9].

Besides the above issues, there were also intense debates about what actually determine community attachment. A number of socio-demographic variables including age, gender, place of birth, length of residency, income and marital status have been tested in previous studies, but lack of consensus among scholars about which variables is the most influential [5, 8, 11, 12].

Accordingly, this study formulated several research questions to tackle the aforementioned issues. Firstly, what is the relationship between community attachment and perceptions towards WHS? Secondly, which socio-demographic variables determine community attachment?

Literature Review: According to Jimura [13], perceptions towards WHS can be broken into two dimensions, namely perceived benefits and perceived costs. Both perceived benefits and perceived costs of WHS were not only confined into the impacts of tourism activities per se, but also the impacts of mandatory conservation imposed on WHS. The conservation regimenation for WHS often put restrictions on local residents especially in terms of physical development and traditional economic activities.
that may pose danger to the integrity of heritage resources [14, 15]. Studying residents’ perceptions alone is also inadequate without putting the efforts on understanding its determining factors. Previous studies have suggested that community attachment is one of the most important factors in shaping residents’ perceptions towards tourism development [2, 16, 17].

Community attachment gained its popularity during the time when sociologists were very much concerned about the effects of urbanisation and industrialization on the social fabric of a community [18]. The transformation of community (germeinschaft) from pre-industrial era to the current modern society (gesellschaft) was known to disturb and weaken the personal relationships and family bonding [11]. According to Gursoy et al. [2], community attachment can be defined as “the level of social bonds such as friendships, sentiment and social participation” (p. 86). Meanwhile, Nicholas et al. [6], described community attachment as “a complex, integrating, multi-faceted concept that incorporates the relationship between people and their community” (p. 395). Thus, in conclusion, individual that have close relationship with other people in his or her community can be said to have strong community attachment.

In tourism literature, the concerns were more towards the effects of community attachment on perceptions and attitudes to tourism development. One of the primary reasons of studying community attachment was because of its ability to explain how a person sentimentally rooted with a particular community and heritage [10]. Such emotional connection provides an explanation of why strongly attached residents have favourable attitudes towards the preservation of community and heritage characteristics than the rest [8, 9].

Some studies found that strongly attached residents perceived tourism development in a positive manner [3, 17, 19, 20]. On the contrary, other studies found that strongly attached residents were not favourable of tourism development [2, 5, 7, 21]. The reason being for this outcomes, could be that some strongly attached residents perceived tourism as beneficial for the local economic development, while other equally attached residents perceived tourism as a threat to their cultural and natural heritage.

Besides the above, scholars were also not in agreement about what actually determine community attachment. Some suggested that community attachment could be determined by place of birth [8], length of residency [5, 11, 12, 22], gender and marital status [23], age and income [12]. However, to solve these discrepancies, more research need to be carried out in different setting especially in developing countries.

The following hypotheses were formulated to answer the research questions:

\[ H1: \] There is a positive relationship between community attachment and perceived benefits of WHS.

\[ H2: \] There is a negative relationship between community attachment and perceived costs of WHS.

\[ H3: \] There are significant differences in community attachment according to gender.

\[ H4: \] There are significant differences in community attachment according to age.

\[ H5: \] There are significant differences in community attachment according to income.

\[ H6: \] There are significant differences in community attachment according to place of birth.

\[ H7: \] There are significant differences in community attachment according to length of residency.

**Study Methods:** This section discusses the study site, instrument development, sampling procedure, data collection and analysis to answer the research questions.

**Study Site:** The study site is Lenggong district situated in Perak, Malaysia. Lenggong has recently been designated as a WHS by United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2012. Lenggong WHS is one of the most important archaeological sites in the world as it provides evidence of early human inhabitants in South East Asia dating back as early as 1.8 million years ago. The carbon dating tests also found many other archaeological finds including pre-historic stone tools and early human skeletons. Since its designation, Lenggong has been receiving a growing number of visitors and funding from federal government agencies to improve its tourist-related infrastructures [17].

**Instruments Development:** This study utilised eleven items of community attachment as adopted from Theodori...
Higher score reflects strong attachment with the community. Meanwhile, for perceptions towards WHS, fourteen items were integrated from several studies [6, 14, 24]. The measurement scales for both community attachment and perceptions towards WHS designation were in the form of continuous scale, where 1 indicated ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 as ‘strongly agree’.

**Sampling Procedures:** The sample unit of this study were the households who live in villages within and adjacent to the WHS. A total of 450 households were selected using the systematic random sampling procedures of every 5th house.

**Data Analysis:** The data from this study was subjected to multivariate analysis techniques starting with descriptive analysis, factor analysis and lastly simple regression using Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS version 22). Before the multivariate analyses, all the data were subjected to normality test, univariate and multivariate outlier detections, reliability test, linearity of phenomenon, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity tests to ensure its appropriateness.

**Study Results**

**Descriptive Statistics:** A total of 401 from 450 returned questionnaires were used for further analyses after data cleaning exercises. The socio-demographic analysis shows the following results.

**Factor Analysis Results:** The principal component analysis has deleted 3 items from community attachment due to low factor loading below 0.45. The principle component analysis revealed the presence of only one factor which has eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 59.5 percent of the total variance. The details of factor loading are presented in the Table 2 below:

The fourteen items in the perceptions towards WHS scale were processed using principal component analysis. Based on the principal component analysis, a total of 3 items were deleted because factor loading lower than 0.45.

The principal component analysis also revealed the presence of two factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1. Factor 1 explains 37.7 percent of the variance, meanwhile factor 2 explains 14.7 percent of variance. Inspection of the component loadings revealed that all 11 items load strongly on component 1 and 2. With reference to existing literature, Factor 1 was named as “perceived benefits of WHS” and Factor 2 as “perceived costs of WHS” [6, 14, 24]. The details of factor loading are presented in the Table 3 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 30</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 40</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 50</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 – 60</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 60</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siamese</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not go to school</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First degree</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduate</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No income</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than RM1000</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM1,001-2,000</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM2,001-3,000</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM3,001-4,000</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RM4,001-5,000</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenggong</td>
<td>77.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other than Lenggong</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of residency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 5 years</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 years</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 years</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 30 years</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishery</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarry</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logging</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guano collector</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homestay</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local cottage industry</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery stores</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Factor Loading for Community Attachment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables / Items</th>
<th>Factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am very attached to this community</td>
<td>.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I belong to this community</td>
<td>.781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The friendships and associations that I have with other people in this community mean a lot to me</td>
<td>.771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the people in the community were planning something, I’d think of it as something we were doing rather than they were doing</td>
<td>.797</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I needed advice about something, I could go to someone in this community</td>
<td>.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I agree with most people in this community about what is important in life</td>
<td>.740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel loyal to the people in this community</td>
<td>.746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d like to think of myself as similar to the people who live in this community</td>
<td>.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
<td>4.758</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of explained variance</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Factor Loading for Perceptions towards WHS Designation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor loadings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factor 1: Perceived benefits of WHS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The protection of WHS benefits future generation</td>
<td>.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is important to protect the WHS for the survival of various archaeological artefacts</td>
<td>.765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being part of community rich in culture and history</td>
<td>.620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving community’s physical infrastructure</td>
<td>.729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth of local cottage industry</td>
<td>.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsiders/tourists encroachment to the area</td>
<td>.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition as WHS</td>
<td>.496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor 2: Perceived costs of WHS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The WHS has created problems in my life</td>
<td>.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The WHS is too large and take up too much land space</td>
<td>.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions on other economic activities (e.g. agriculture, mining, logging)</td>
<td>.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions on future development potential (housing area, commercial area, industrial area etc.)</td>
<td>.811</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Regression Analysis:** The simple regression analysis indicated that community attachment has a significant positive relationship with perceived benefits of WHS ($R^2 = .147$, $F= 68.926$, $p<.01$) while at the same time established significant negative relationship with perceived costs of WHS($R^2 = .118$, $F= 53.417$, $p<.01$). This suggests that, residents with stronger community attachment perceived WHS in a positive manner and vice-verse.

In conclusion, this study has accepted the several hypotheses, H1, H2, H6 and H7. The rest of hypotheses on the other hand, were rejected due to insufficient evidence to support the outcomes.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This study suggests that residents with strong attachment to the community will most likely perceive the designation of Lenggong as WHS in a positive manner. This is supported by a number of previous studies [3, 8, 17, 19, 20]. One of the possible reasons for this outcome was that, strongly attached residents were craving for the success of Lenggong as WHS destination.

On top of that, this study has also successfully identified which socio-demographic variables that influence community attachment. This study has found that place of birth and length of residency to play an important role in determining individual’s attachment to the community in line with several studies.
What can be concluded here is that, people who were born in Lenggong, established stronger attachment with other people in the community as compared to those who were born elsewhere. Similarly, length of residency also correlates positively with strength of community attachment.

REFERENCES