



## Intangible values and tourists' motivations: The case of the Pahang National Park

Ching Fei Ern<sup>1</sup>, Goh Hong Ching<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Geography Department, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University Malaya, <sup>2</sup>Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Faculty of Build Environment, University Malaya & Universiti Malaya Spatial-environment Governance for Sustainability Research, Universiti Malaya (UMSERGE)

Correspondence: Goh Hong Ching (email: gohhc@um.edu.my)

### Abstract

Protected areas are fast becoming tourist attractions and as such have contributed increasingly to nature-based tourism, the industry's fastest growing sector. It is assumed that tourists visiting the protected areas are motivated by intangible values such as recreational, cultural and spiritual, educational, artistic and aesthetic, and existential values. This paper presents the findings of a study aimed at examining the kind of intangible values that had motivated tourists to the Pahang National Park (Taman Negara Pahang, TNP). A total of 341 samples was collected from a questionnaire survey involving both local and international tourists of the TNP. Results of the analyses revealed that tourists to TNP were generally motivated by particular recreational values ('to exercise'), cultural values ('to understand indigenous people's lifestyle'), educational values ('to recognize and gain knowledge about the local flora and fauna'), artistic and aesthetic values ('to show concern with the existence of natural environment'). As for the park existential values, local and international tourists demonstrated different perceptions. Most local tourists were not willing to pay more for park's entrance fee as compared to the international tourists. Both parties, nevertheless, were willing to pay more if it was to be used for nature conservation purposes.

**Keywords:** intangible values, protected areas, quantitative method, Taman Negara Pahang, tourist demographic, tourist motivation

### Introduction

The natural environment is the basis for a marketable tourist attraction. Nowadays, visits to natural areas have become more popular (Eagles, Bowman & Teresa, 2001). There are reasons why people visit and care about protected areas, which can be linked to the existence of intangible values in protected areas. According to Harmon and Putney (2003), value is defined as 'something of merit, something estimable-whether or not such worth is assigned or recognized by people', while intangible values are that which enrich the psychological, emotional, intellectual, cultural and spiritual, and/or creative aspects of human existence and well-being.

Meanwhile, WCPA (2000, as cited in Harmon & Putney, 2003: 4) defined intangible values of protected areas as "that which enriches the intellectual, psychological, emotional, spiritual, cultural and/or creative aspects of human existence and well-being." Subsequently, the WCPA Task Force classified these intangible values into 11 major categories. These include recreational, cultural, spiritual, artistic, aesthetic, educational, research and monitoring, existence, identity, peace and therapeutic values. For the purpose of discussion, this paper focuses on recreational, cultural, educational, artistic and aesthetic and existence values which are considered the most related to tourist's motivation.

Tourists are one of the key stakeholders contributing to a protected area's economy. Tourists visiting protected areas are motivated by the intangible values and wish to better discover those values during

their visit (Harmon & Putney, 2003). Every tourist possess a personal perception towards a specific tourism destination. Each destination reflects different type of values due to their distinctive physical and cultural features (Lopoukhine, 2008). Thus, it is important to identify these values which motivate the tourists and in return, it is also vital to explore how tourists perceived these values and their needs and expectation in protected areas.

To date, most studies examined travel motivations related to the behaviour and attitudes of tourists as well as the travel patterns (Jonsson & Devonish, 2008; Mohd Hafiz, Zulhan, Muhammad Izzat, Hazmal, & Mohd Raziff, 2010; Vuuren & Slabbert, 2011; Bui & Jolliffe, 2011; Chaipinit & Phetvaroon, 2011). Rarely, studies examined the tourist perception of intangible values in protected areas. Thus, this study aims to identify the intangible values that motivate tourists in TNP.

### *Motivation of intangible values among tourists in protected areas*

The recreational use of protected areas is defined as “visits by the local and regional residents and those who do not reside in the region or country” (tourists) (Harmon & Putney, 2003, p. 7). Recreational values refer to the qualities of natural areas that interact with humans to refresh, restore or create anew through stimulation and exercise of the mind, body and soul. It is also a place to increase family cohesiveness and help relieve a person’s stress from hectic urban lifestyles (Eagles & McCool, 2002; Putney, 2003; Lopoukhine, 2008).

Besides that, cultural values also motivate tourists to visit protected areas. Protected areas contain cultural values when tourists observe, experience, appreciate and learn about other cultures than theirs in a park (Lockwood et al., 2006). For tourists, the value of viewing, experiencing, appreciating and learning about such sites and the cultures from which they derive, gives them a reason for visiting subsequently leading them to assign values to a protected area (Lockwood et al., 2006). Through participation in tourism, people can see and experience their own and other cultures, enhance communication between people from different backgrounds, increase understanding and awareness toward different traditions, religions and rituals (Eagles & McCool, 2002).

Education is also an important function of protected areas. Many protected areas have specific programmes designed to convey knowledge about natural and cultural heritage (Lockwood et al., 2006). Every protected area contains something to learn and could offer education to tourists either directly or indirectly. Tourists are motivated by educational values in protected areas because there is a general trend where more tourists are interested to be involved in learning-while-travelling today (Eagles, McCool & Haynes, 2002). Meanwhile, through guided tours and learning travel programme hosted by educational group tours, tourists are educated indirectly while they participate in learning activities like wildlife observation, cultural shows, festivals, and nature study (Harmon & Putney, 2003; Mansourian, Zogib, Dudley & Stolton, 2008; Wight, 2001).

Different climatic zones in the world create distinctive features of each area (Nogueira & Flores, 2004). These different and unique features of protected areas can create artistic and aesthetic values among tourists. Artistic values refer to the qualities of nature that inspire human imagination in creative expression while aesthetic values refer to appreciation of the harmony, beauty and profound meaning found in nature (Harmon & Putney, 2003). Normally artistic values are linked with the beauty of nature that creates artistic inspiration of tourists. Aesthetic values are often related to aesthetic appreciation. This value can be explored when tourists enjoy and appreciate the existence of the nature features (mountain landscapes, forests, waterfalls, and caves). Nogueira and Flores (2004) recognized the influence of direct experience and intellectual knowledge of an area on the appreciation of aesthetic value.

Existence values refer to the willingness to pay, satisfaction and symbolic importance derived from tourists knowing protected areas exist and being protected. Existence values can also be part of a moral foundation underlying which people fear that the modern civilization destroys nature (Harmon, 2004). For tourists, they are willing to pay and spend their time to visit the parks. For older parks, tourists may have visited it for numerous times or stayed for a long period each visit and subsequently developed unique perspectives towards the protected areas. This situation can be seen in long established parks when

tourists repeat their visitation (Harmon, 2004; Harmon & Putney, 2003; Eagles & McCool, 2002). The level of satisfaction and willingness to pay indicate the level of appreciation among the tourists towards the existence of a park.

### Study area

Taman Negara Pahang (TNP) is a subset to Taman Negara and the largest compared to Taman Negara Kelantan and Taman Negara Terengganu. It covers an area of 2,477 sq km with more than half of the area (57%) located below 305m above sea level. The central coordinates of the park are 04°30' North latitude and 102°59' East longitude. The climate of TNP is in between 25-37°C and it is typically humid and hot (Ghazally & Salina, 2010). TNP is graded as a Type II protected area according to the IUCN category system (Laila, 2011). It has outstanding tourism features. These include Mount Tahan, the highest peak of Peninsular Malaysia with an altitude range of 2187m, six rivers for fishing spots i.e. Sungai Tahan, Sungai Tembeling, Sungai Keniam, Sungai Tenor, Sungai Perkai and Sungai Terenggan, as well as the home for rare flora and fauna. TNP is also one of the world's oldest tropical rainforests, estimated to be 130 million years old. Apart from that, in terms of human habitation, the evidence such as the bronze artefacts were found along the Sungai Tembeling which supported human existence for almost 2000 years ago.

Tourism activities are the prominent programme in TNP. It is the most popular park among the tourists as compared to Taman Negara Terengganu and Taman Negara Kelantan (refer Table 1.). The main reasons of its popularity are due to the ease of access, sufficient provision of accommodation and other supporting facilities, natural resources as attractions, and the wide range of activities offered. Apart from these criteria, it is also important to identify the values which form the foundation of tourist motivation.

**Table 1. Tourists arrival statistics in Taman Negara Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan**

Years	State	Pahang	Terengganu	Kelantan
2005		71,631	4593	3045
2006		79,758	4430	3403
2007		81,974	7237	6454
2008		86,617	8380	6818
2009		86,685	9178	7185
2010		85,576	9897	6934
2011		88,609	9133	5449
<b>Total</b>		<b>580,850</b>	<b>52,848</b>	<b>39,288</b>

Source: Taman Negara Pahang, Kelantan & Terengganu (2012).

### Methodology

This research utilises the quantitative method. A tourists' questionnaire was developed to identify the values that motivated tourists in TNP. The sample size of this research was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's formula. A total of 341 questionnaire surveys was collected, consisting of 174 local tourists and 167 international tourists. The respondents were approached at three strategic locations, i.e. Kuala Tahan's bus stop, the Canopy Walkway and also around the floating restaurants on Sungai Tembeling. Tourists were asked to provide their demographic background and to rate a series of values including recreational values, cultural values, educational values, artistic and aesthetic values, and existence values. Every value was to be rated base on a five-point Likert scale. By using SPSS, this research presented the

analysis findings using descriptive statistics through frequency distribution and percentage. Participant observation was also carried out in this research to observe the interaction between nature guides and tourists.

## Findings and discussion

### *Demographic characteristic of tourists*

The results from questionnaire survey show that 51.9% of the respondents were female and 48.1% were male. TNP appears to attract more youth and young adult tourists with 49.0% of the tourists aged between 25-59 years old and 48.1% of the tourists between 15-24 years old. 51.0% of tourists were local while 49.0% were international. The tourists had middle and high educational attainments with 32.84% at the college level and 35.48% were degree holders. Overall, tourists' occupation indicated that 37.0% are students while 22.9% are professionals. The three highest percentages of tourists' annual household income are RM50,000 – RM99,999 (19.9%), followed by RM100,000 and above (15.5%), and below RM20,000 (14.4%). This shows that tourists visiting TNP are mostly fairly high income receivers, a factor that encourage them to travel.

### *Tourists' motivation*

The resurrection of tourism development in Malaysia occurred after people from other countries visit our country because of its uniqueness, beauty and originality of nature which are not found in their respective countries (Yahaya, 2008). Today, natural environment of an area has become the basis for marketable tourism attraction. Visit to a natural area becomes more popular and is on the rise among tourists (Eagles, Bowman, and Teresa, 2001).

Analysis findings show that tourists were motivated by intangible values. They are recreational, cultural, educational, artistic and aesthetic, as well as existence values. Figure 1. shows that tourists were motivated by recreational values in TNP. Tourists went to TNP to exercise (55.7%), to release stress (52.5%), to refresh one's mind (49.6%), to calm down and to improve emotion (49.0%), to participate in

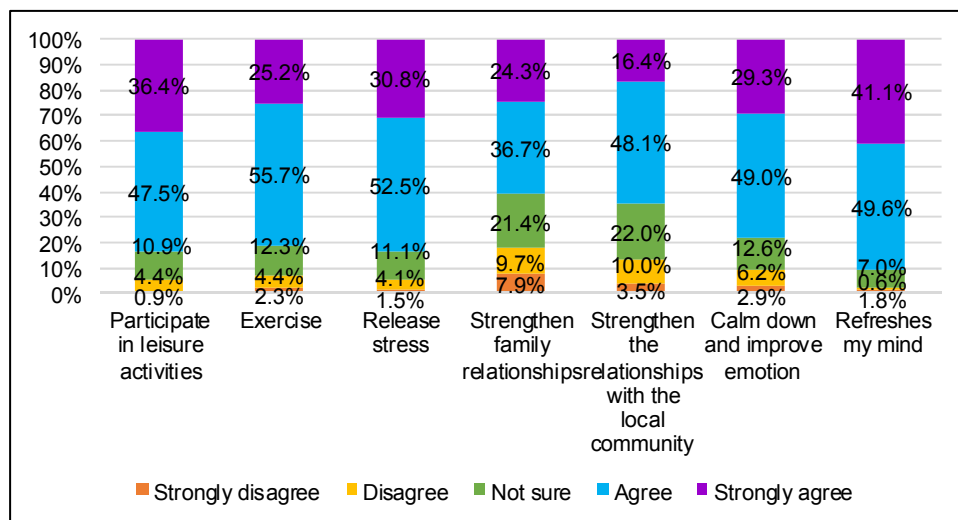


Figure 1. Motivation of recreational values

leisure activities (47.9%), and also to strengthen family relationships (36.7%). This finding is consistent with previous studies by Vuuren and Slabbert (2011) and Farah (2003 as cited in Amran, Zainab, Nor Azina & Ahmad Tajuddin, 2008) which indicated recreational purposes as the motivation of tourists visiting a natural area. Apart from serving the nature conservation purpose, protected areas provide ground for the enjoyment of nature from recreational activities (Amran et al., 2008). Based on the results, most tourists were motivated to exercise in TNP. This result is related to the characteristic of TNP, e.g., a tropical rainforest with humid climate and average temperature of 25-37°C as well as its location in the lowlands which is suitable for tourists to exercise. Through observation, it was found that most of the tourists also participated in activities such as the canopy walkway, jungle trekking, rapid shooting and jungle night walk.

Tourists were also motivated by the cultural values in TNP (Figure 2). For cultural values, tourists visited TNP to understand the indigenous people's lifestyle (44.6%), to experience indigenous people's lifestyle (44.0%), to show concern on the existence of indigenous people (43.4%), to see the indigenous people and local people village's (42.5%), to recognize indigenous people's hunting equipment (39.9%), to see indigenous people's house structure (39.9%), and to get closer to indigenous people (39.3%). The indigenous people in TNP are a part of the TNP's resources and TNP protects their culture by allowing them to continue living and practice their lifestyle. The Batek people who live in TNP still practise a semi-traditional and nomadic lifestyle. They live in huts built from Nipah leaves for roofs, bamboo for structures and walls and hunt animals for sustenance in TNP. Discovering the different cultural practice and lifestyle is one of the motivations of tourists' visit to a new place (Chaipinit & Phetvaroon, 2011). The uniqueness of the indigenous people's culture and lifestyle has motivated tourists to make an attempt to understand their day-to-day living. The local people living surround TNP offer packages for tourists to visit indigenous people's villages. Indigenous people will demonstrate the use of blowpipe to hunt and to start a fire by rubbing rattan and 'Meranti' wood.

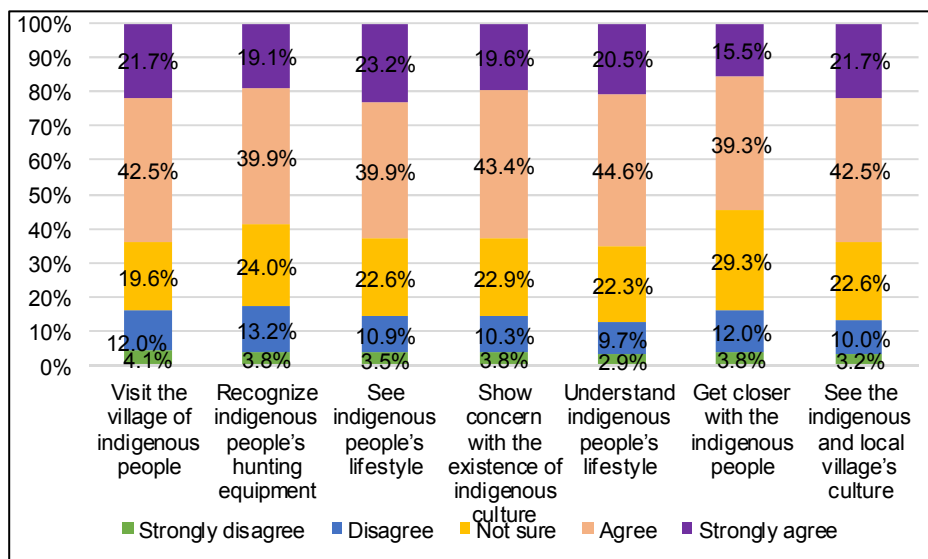


Figure 2. Motivation of cultural values

Tourists also visited TNP for its educational values (Figure 3). Tourists strongly agreed that their visit aimed to explore nature (48.1%) and to recognize and gain knowledge about the flora and fauna species in TNP (58.1%), to share knowledge with others (56.9%), to explore the history of TNP, nature and indigenous people culture (55.4%), to learn the customs, cultures, and lifestyle of the indigenous people (53.4%), and to explore indigenous people culture in terms of tradition, beliefs and taboos (51.9%). TNP is rich with biodiversity which includes flora and fauna that may not be found at other countries. It is

a home to more than 10,000 species of plants, 300 mammal species including tigers, elephants, sun bear, tapirs, wild pigs, Sumatran rhinoceros. More than 300 species of fish and 250 species of birds were recorded in the park (Jenut Holiday, 2014). One of the objectives of park's establishment is to provide environmental education. Through signboards provided along the trails in TNP, tourists have access to information about the specific flora and fauna species as well as the tropical ecosystem. The activities offered in and outside TNP such as guided tours, jungle trekking, visits to indigenous people's villages, night safari, jungle night walk, and river boat rides also support its educational objective.

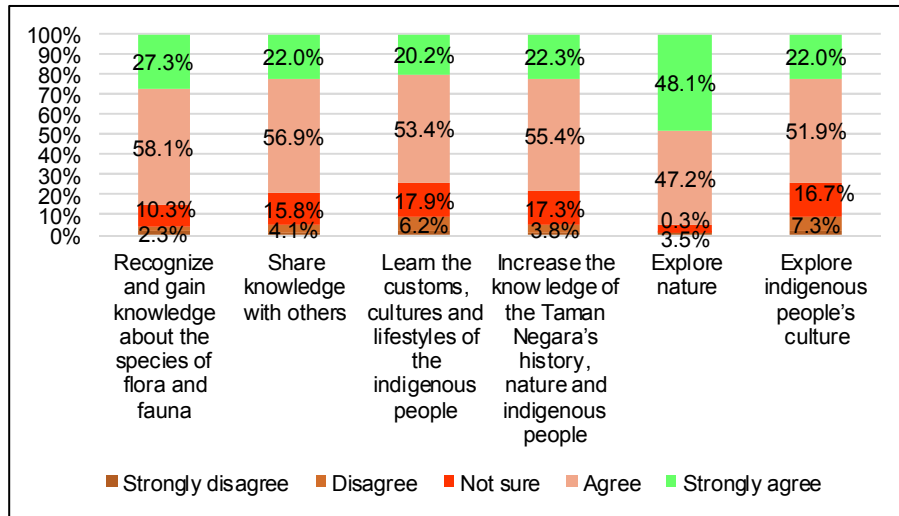


Figure 3. Motivation of educational values

Tourists were also strongly motivated by artistic and aesthetic values in TNP (Figure 4). They strongly agreed that their visit to TNP made them enjoying and appreciating the beauty of nature (52.8%). They were also able to show their concern and care for the natural environment (54.3%), to find a deeper meaning about nature (51.3%), and to revisit the park based on the past experience (35.8%). Nature is the

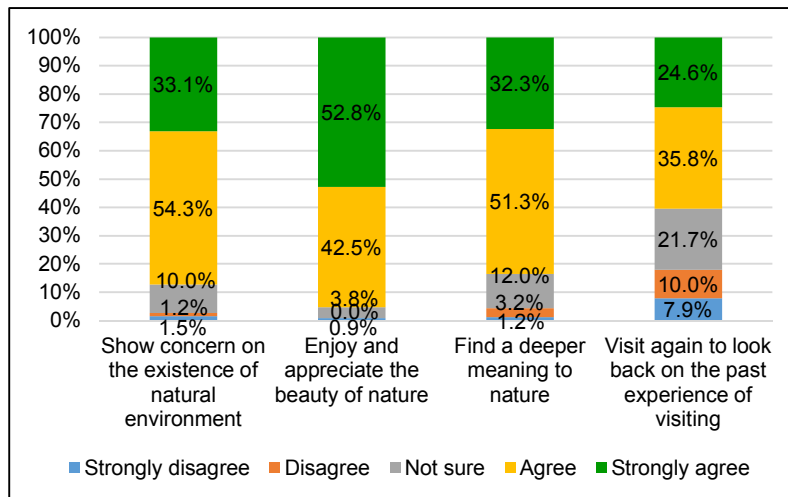


Figure 4. Motivation of artistic and aesthetic values



key resource of TNP. Tourists were aware of the importance of protected areas thus visiting the parks as an attempt to show their appreciation towards natural environment (Harmon & Putney, 2003). They were aware that TNP is gazetted for nature conservation, to protect the flora and fauna and the natural beauty from the threats of rapid urban development. Through participating in activities, tourists could hear the sounds and see the natural scenery, which inspire their imagination (Harmon & Putney, 2003). Tourists also have chance to get in closer contact with animals such as warthogs, deer, hedgehogs and birds in the park.

Existence values of TNP were measured by the tourist level of satisfaction on the facilities provided and the willingness to pay (Harmon and Putney, 2003). In average, both local and international tourists rated high level of satisfaction for the level of cleanliness (24.0% versus 19.1%), activities (24.6% versus 21.4%), staff hospitality (25.2% versus 21.4%), and information provided by the Department of Wildlife and National Park (27.3% versus 17.9%) (Table 2).

Besides that, local tourists were also satisfied for ease of access to location (21.7%), accommodation (20.8%), basic facilities (20.8%), public transportations (17.6%), accommodation price (20.2%) and fees charged on activities (19.9%). Relatively, the international tourists mostly rated ‘as expected’ for accessibility to location (24.3%), accommodation (17.3%), basic facilities (22.3%), public transportations (17.6%), accommodation price (18.5%) and fees charged on activities (21.4%). Most of the international tourists (30.8%) and local tourists (21.4%) rated souvenir’s price as within their expectation.

The accessibility to the location was rated as expected by international tourists because tourists had to use public transport such as buses and boats as opposed to local tourists who travelled by own transport. The irregular and infrequent schedules of these public transports were the key reason for less positive responds among international tourists. No taxi service was available from Kuala Tahan to Jerantut and the local buses (Ling Siong) and van service (Latiff Othman) only run four times a day, i.e., at 7.30am, 10.00am, 3.30am and 7.00pm. Sometimes buses were not punctual and there was no prior notice of trip cancellation.

**Table 2. Tourists’ satisfaction on facilities in TNP**

Existence values	Most satisfying		Satisfying		As expected		Disappointing		Most disappointing	
	M	I	M	I	M	I	M	I	M	I
a) Ease of accessibility to location	10.6%	4.7%	21.7%	15.8%	15.5%	24.3%	2.9%	3.8%	0.3%	0.3%
b) Accommodation	10.9%	7.3%	20.8%	17.0%	13.5%	17.3%	5.3%	6.7%	0.6%	0.6%
c) Cleanliness	10.3%	6.2%	24.0%	19.1%	12.3%	17.6%	3.5%	5.3%	0.9%	0.9%
d) Basic facilities (toilets, prayer rooms, dustbins)	11.1%	5.9%	20.8%	14.4%	14.1%	22.3%	4.1%	6.2%	0.9%	0.3%
e) Activities provided	13.5%	10.9%	24.6%	21.4%	10.6%	13.8%	2.3%	2.6%	0.0%	0.3%
f) Information provided by the Department of Wildlife	11.4%	6.5%	27.3%	17.9%	9.4%	17.3%	2.3%	6.5%	0.6%	0.9%
g) Public transportations (Bus, taxi, boat, train)	10.3%	7.3%	24.9%	16.1%	11.7%	17.6%	4.1%	7.0%	0.0%	0.9%
h) Staff hospitality	11.7%	11.1%	25.2%	21.4%	11.4%	13.2%	2.3%	2.9%	0.3%	0.3%
i) Meals	6.7%	6.5%	16.1%	18.8%	15.0%	17.3%	8.2%	5.3%	5.0%	1.2%
j) Accommodations’ price	7.3%	8.2%	20.2%	18.2%	17.9%	18.5%	5.0%	2.9%	0.6%	1.2%
k) Souvenirs’ price	6.7%	2.6%	17.6%	8.5%	21.4%	30.8%	3.2%	7.0%	2.1%	0.0%
l) Fees for activities	8.8%	5.3%	19.9%	13.8%	17.3%	21.4%	3.8%	7.6%	1.2%	0.9%

\*M = Malaysian tourists

\*I = International tourists

As for accommodation facilities, most of the local operators were not properly trained to manage hostels and guesthouses. Thus, the accommodation provided by the locals did not meet the expectation among the international tourists. For instance, the international tourists were in the opinion that the washrooms were not very clean and sometimes they were closed. Moreover, there was no washroom at some attraction spots within TNP such as Lubuk Simpon. Tourists could not use the toilet or to change after swimming in the river.

Activities outside TNP were offered by travel agencies. The price varies among the travel agencies. Tourists responded rationally to the price by rated the fees charged as expected.

The success of nature conservation in protected areas in future would depend on tourists' satisfaction on the facilities in terms of building a good impression to the tourists for repeated visitation (Nuva et al., 2009). Therefore, the management should take action to improve the tourists' satisfaction. The park authority needs to give more attention for better public transport service in order to improve the accessibility to the location. The price and quality of accommodation, basic facilities such as toilets, prayer rooms, and dustbins, and activity charges must be further improved so that tourists can enjoy themselves thereby increasing the satisfaction level.

Willingness to pay among tourists helps to determine the existence of TNP (Harmon & Putney, 2003). There is a significant difference between local and international tourists' willingness to pay (Figure 5). Most of the local tourists (33.7%) disagreed to pay more for the entrance, activities and facilities fee while most of the international tourists (42.0%) agreed to pay more if the fees charged would help to support the increased park expenses. Local tourists (15.2%) were not willing to pay more because they were in the opinion that it is the responsibility of the government to protect the park and to provide the recreational facilities.

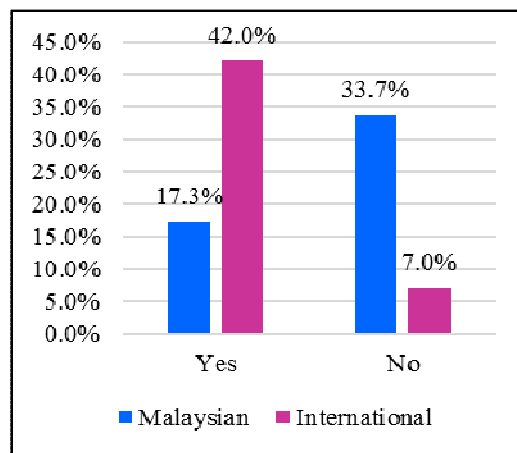


Figure 5. Willingness to pay among local and international tourists

Both local and international tourists (34.9%) agreed to pay more on the entrance fee and other charges if it is used for conservation purpose. 11.7% of tourists agreed to pay more if the money helps to improve the living standards of the local and indigenous people living around the park. Another 11.1% agreed to pay more if it is to be used to improve and upgrade the current visitor facilities. This result is consistent with studies by Reynisdottir, Song and Agrusa (2008) and Wang and Jia (2012) where most tourists were willing to pay if the money is used to protect and improve the site.

In terms of amount, majority of the tourists (37.0%) were willing to pay more between RM5 and RM10 while 11.4% were willing to pay more of an amount lesser than RM5, and 10.6% of tourists were willing to pay more than RM10.

Tourists were also asked where their visit to TNP would be affected if the fee increments were implemented and exceeded the amount they willing to pay. Almost half of the tourists (45.2%) thought that it would not affect their visitation because they still think TNP is worth a visit but 37% of tourists



said they would think twice and might visit TNP less frequent. Another 13.8% were in the opinion that they would look for other destinations.

Relatively, international tourists were less likely to be influenced by the fee increased. As compared to local tourists (15.0%), 30.2% of the international tourists thought that the fee increment in TNP would not affect their visit because they think it is worth the visit and TNP allows them to carry out various activities. 25.5% local tourists said they would think twice and consider for less frequent visit compared to only 11.4% of the international tourists who shared the similar opinion. More local tourists (8.2%) would look for other destinations if the fee is increased as compared to international tourists (5.6%) (Table 3).

**Table 3. Will fee increment affect tourists' visit to TNP?**

Nationality	No, because in my opinion it is worth it and allows me to carry out various activities	I will think twice and lessen the frequency of visits	I will look for other destinations	Others
Malaysian	15.0%	25.5%	8.2%	2.3%
International	30.2%	11.4%	5.6%	1.8%

Tourists' willingness to pay is important because it shows people who care for the environment are more understanding of the rationale to pay more on something they care about (Reynisdottir, Song and Agrusa, 2008). Although the fact that local tourists were not willing to pay more compared to international tourists may not merely due to the relatively lower environmental awareness but the income level, it is important for the park authority to increase the awareness among local tourists by organizing more educational-based programs. The good impression of the educational programs can also serve as the publicity for TNP through the word-of-mouth effect spread among the friends and relatives of the tourists. (Togridou et al., 2006; Salamiah et al., 2011).

## Conclusion

Understanding tourist motivation to a protected area such as a national park is critical as its success as a tourism destination is closely related to why people choose to go to the park. This study found that tourists not only acknowledged the vital importance of recreational values of the TNP but also its other intangible values including the cultural, educational, artistic, aesthetic, and existential values. Such values were associated with the park resources (flora and fauna), geographical characteristics (climate and landform) and activities offered. Local and international tourists were also concerned about the TNP environmental conservation, in particular, the protection of its biodiversity in the face of creeping urbanization. Identifying these values should help the park authority to respond to various tourist expectations through the formulation of new marketing strategies that harmonise with environmental conservation of the TNP.

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