

# IS ISLAND TOURISM GOOD FOR ME? SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN'S VOICES TOWARDS ISLAND TOURISM IMPACTS AND WELL-BEING IN LIFE DOMAINS

Areeta Tirasattayapitak<sup>1</sup>,

Sumattaya Thammajak<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

This paper reports the perceptions of school-aged children towards island tourism impacts on their sense of well-being in various life domains and level of support for tourism development. Research revealed children's less than positive perceptions of tourism development, with concerns over negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts of tourism. The children regarded their material well-being without its links to tourism. Moreover, the children noted the high level of negative impacts of tourism in their lives and communities, which seemed to diminish their good sense of safety well-being. Most children showed support for tourism development if it implies their own entrepreneurship. Their major push factor to support tourism was money stimulus that would in turn enhance their healthier quality of life.

**Keywords:** 1) Island tourism 2) School-aged children 3) Island tourism impacts  
4) Well-being in life domains

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<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Tourism Management, Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, Prince of Songkla University

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Tourism Management, Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism, Prince of Songkla University

## Introduction

Tourism development is an important trade which significantly boosts economic growth, infrastructure and social well-being, as well as promotes long term cultural exchange (Hao, Long & Kleckley, 2011; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Yu, Chancellor & Cole, 2011). The development related to tourism is often a crucial issue of discourse when it creates economic, socio-cultural and environmental changes on the hosts' life in communities (Chen & Chen, 2010; Lee, 2013; Stylidis, Biran, Sit & Szivas, 2014). Characterised as either mainland or island tourism, it was found that for tourism support in the long term, the hosts' needs should be given the priority over the tourism development (Pham, 2012).

Throughout the decades, island tourism and its developments have been studied by the scholars from the perspectives of geographic areas (Garau-Vadell, Díaz-Armas & Gutierrez-Taño, 2014) such as the Isles of Scilly and Isle of Wight, United Kingdom (Grydehoj & Hayward, 2014) and Bruny and Magnetic islands, Australia (Moyle, Croy & Weiler, 2010), marketing and competitiveness (Croes, 2010) and socio-cultural impacts to hosts, especially the adult hosts (Müller & Jansson, 2007; Stylidis, Terzidou & Terzidis, 2007). Many small islands have been renowned as the important tourist destinations (Croes & Semrad, 2015; Parry & McElroy, 2017; Ridderstaat & Nijkamp, 2016), while confronted with economic disadvantages (Pratt, 2015) in terms of diseconomies of scale and high level of openness to international trade (Hampton & Christensen, 2007).

Numerous island destinations in Thailand currently use tourism as a mechanism of economic development. Selected as the location for this research is Koh Lanta, a tourism-dependent island in the Andaman Sea, located in the province of Krabi, South of Thailand. It is approximately 90 km far from Krabi town center and 30 km southeast of Phi Phi Island. It covers the area of 472 km<sup>2</sup>, including three major islands and 53 smaller neighboring islands. The three major islands are Koh Klang, separated from the mainland of Krabi province by a small river and road bridge, the smaller Koh Lanta Noi and the largest Koh Lanta Yai which is the most populated island of the three. Effective August, 1990, the area of 151.90 km<sup>2</sup> of Koh Lanta was officially announced as Mu Koh Lanta National Park. Of the islands, Koh Lanta Yai, also known as Koh Lanta, is the most popular for tourists. Koh Lanta's tourism potential lies in its beautiful beaches, numerous marine resources and opportunities for recreation, spiritual exploration and relaxation, as well as an interesting mix of ethnicities and cultures. Since the year 2002, Koh Lanta has encountered a rapid growth of tourism and a large influx of tourist

arrivals (Yai & Province, 2007). The resort and hotel construction expanded from 46 units in 2001 to 154 units in 2006 to serve the remarkable increasing number of tourists. In 2001, the island received 113,000 tourists and by 2004, the figure of holidaymakers augmented to 210,000 people. It is worth noting that Koh Lanta still enjoys the tremendous growth in tourist arrivals, which surpassed 1,000,000 in 2017. This significant growth rate makes Koh Lanta the second most visited island in Krabi Province after Phi Phi Island ([www.krabi-magazine.com](http://www.krabi-magazine.com), 2018).

The development on the island is likely to have a profound positive and negative effects on the destination itself and all members of hosts communities, similarly to other tourist destinations (Ko & Stewart, 2002). However, examining the children as members of the host communities (Gamradt, 1995), and their satisfaction with own well-being in various life domains affected by the tourism in developing countries, represent underexplored research areas (Carpenter, 2015; Kim, Uysal & Sirgy, 2013; Knies, 2012; Poria & Timothy, 2014; Small, 2008; Tirasattayapitak, Chaiyasain & Beeton, 2015). Hence this paper empirically examines the children's perceptions of economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of island tourism development on their various life domains, such as: material, community, health, safety well-being, as well as children's support for island tourism development. The paper addresses the main issues related to the effects of island tourism on the children's well-being and their support for tourism.

## Island tourism

Island tourism is defined as a tourism in island destinations with the charm of separateness and unique island characteristics. Islands' specific characteristics evoke tourist's desires for the sense of isolation in quest of different climate, physical attractiveness of islands, leisure and other tourism related activities (Baum, 1997; Conlin & Baum, 1995; Croes, 2011; Timothy & Nyaupane, 2009). Many islands and island states have employed tourism to strengthen and boost their economic growth (Amstrong & Read, 2000; Balaguer & Cantavella-Jorda, 2002; Sharpley, 2003) and eliminate poverty amongst the local residents (Easter, 2002). The most important tourism resources of the majority of islands include natural beauty, ecology, exotic attractiveness and landscapes, host community cultures and opportunities for leisure. The foremost emphasis of tourism promotion and development on the islands has been concerned with economic aspects rather than social, environmental and human issues.

This led to the expansion of mass tourism and related consequences of overdevelopment (Dodds & Graci, 2012).

## Tourism Impacts

Many scholars examined the importance of tourism development on islands, locals' perception of tourism impacts (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012), as well as their attitudes towards tourism development (Cañizares, Tabales, & García, 2014; Fredline, Deery & Jago, 2013). The development of tourism was proven to bring both positive and negative economic, socio-cultural and environmental consequences for the local hosts (Andersson & Lundberg, 2013; Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo & Alders, 2013; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). The impacts of tourism development were likely to be more serious on the islands than in the large mainland areas, due to the social and environmental carrying capacity of islands. Therefore, the local island residents demonstrated higher levels of resistance towards the development of tourism (Lee, 2013; Monterrubio, 2016). Tourism developments create both positive and negative impacts on the lives of local hosts. Positive impacts include diversification of the economy (Kim, Chen, & Jan, 2006; Kim et al., 2013; Noriko & Mototsugu, 2007), creation of jobs (Chirenje, Chitombe, Gukurume, Chazovachii & Chitongo, 2013; Látková & Vogt, 2011), improvements in infrastructure and social well-being (Hao, et al., 2011; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Yu et al., 2011; Yang, Ge, Ge, Xi & Li, 2016). However, tourism also produces many disruptive issues, such as sexual abuse of children, child prostitution and exploitation of children by tourists (Curley, 2014), tourist inflows (Liang & Hui, 2016), high rates of accidents, larger amounts of garbage and waste, drugs, crowds and improper behavior of tourists, which seriously depreciate the quality of life for the locals (Andersson & Lundberg, 2013; Nunkoo & So, 2015; Prayag et al., 2013; Monterrubio, 2016). In any community, when the tourism development costs outweigh the benefits, the support for tourism development is likely to be negative (Gursoy, Jurowski & Uysal, 2002; Lee, 2013; Woo, Kim & Uysal, 2015).

## Sense of well-being and life satisfaction (quality of life)

The study of human well-being is a significant issue of interest by scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners worldwide (Andereck & Nyaupane. 2011; Kim et al., 2013; Summers, Smith, Case & Linthurst, 2012). Within studies of human well-being, child well-being denotes the measures of children's quality of life (OECD, 2009). However, the knowledge on what the positive well-being of children actually looks like is still insufficient (Fattore, Mason & Watson, 2007). Hence, no distinctive approach of child well-being measures is developed by the scholars (OECD, 2009). The human well-being is comprised of the four elements, namely basic human needs, economic well-being, environmental well-being and subjective well-being (Summers et al., 2012). Happiness seems to be the conventional element of well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2004). As stated by Kim (2002), the life satisfaction or the quality of life includes five types of well-being in life domains: material well-being, community well-being, emotional well-being, and health and safety well-being. The satisfaction with the material well-being is affected by the cost of living, income and employment. Community well-being involves various aspects of community life and settings to appreciate or dissatisfy the individuals when compared to their neighbors. Emotional well-being is actually positioned in the field of leisure well-being and spiritual well-being. Lastly, the health and safety well-being are expressed in terms of health well-being and safety well-being domain (Ibid.). These domains provide the ground for the study of quality of life of the host community.

## Research Method

The paper represents the qualitative data extracts from the mixed method research study of the island tourism impacts on school-aged children's sense of well-being and support for tourism on the island of Koh Lanta. This paper places emphasis on qualitative methods (Bryman 2004; Robson, 2002, 2011; Simpson, 2011) to explain the perceptions towards the study issues through the lens of school-aged children on Koh Lanta.

Since this research involved children, the ethics of social research with children were strictly adopted, based on their right to be properly researched under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). The school-age children who participated in this study were respected as individuals in their own right, as worthy and capable of recognition and own voice in the research. The researchers informed the children about the research and gained consent

for the field survey. The children's involvement in the processes of field survey has taken place in partnership with caring, skilled adults who provided the appropriate support and guidance to children in order to help convey their opinions within a safe environment (Graham, Powell, Taylor, Anderson & Fitzgerald, 2013). In addition, the children were accordingly protected from all forms of exploitation in the process of study and dissemination of information (Beazley, Bessell, Ennew & Waterson, 2006).

#### *A) Population and data collection*

We studied the school-aged children living in the communities in Koh Lanta. Qualitative data was collected from in-depth semi-structured interviews with a list of the open-ended questions and the field notes, as a part of participatory observations (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; Robson, 2011). The selected children were students of the Lantarapracha-utthit Secondary School, levels 1-6. Their age ranged from 12 to 18 year-old and age selection was made based on children's language and intellectual abilities (Poria & Timothy, 2014) of understanding the research questions. The Director of school was contacted to request an approval for the study. Researchers met with the Director of school and the teachers responsible for the students at the children's school before the interviews. Methods of simple random sampling and snowball sampling were used for the sample selection. The equal probability of being chosen was practiced by putting all children's names into the draw and pulling a random name out of the draw to appoint the first informant of the interview. The first child that was interviewed was then treated as the initiator of the snowball effect by using his or her personal relationships to help identify the subsequent informants (Babbie, 2015). This approach is deemed well suited within the Thai cultural context (Pornpitakpan, 2000). When the interview of one child was completed, another child was selected for the next interview (Babbie, 2015; Robson, 2011). The study randomly sampled children of both genders, without predetermining the number of informants of any specific gender or the age range. The children were assured that their involvement in the project was voluntary and anonymous in order to lower their preconceptions. They were encouraged to give personal views as truthfully as possible (Podsakoff, Mackenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). When the study reached the point of informational redundancy, the study stopped recruiting the new informants (Ashley & Boyd, 2006; Robson, 2002; Sandlowski, 2013). Information redundancy was reached with the fifteenth interview. During the interviews, the children's manners and their interpersonal communication were also observed.

### *B) Data analysis*

The interviews were recorded and transcribed at the end of the day. The study used the content analysis to interpret the interviews (Robson, 2011). In this paper, informants are kept anonymous; IC indicates a child.

## Results

In order to achieve the main purpose of the study, Koh Lanta's school-aged children were asked about the island tourism impacts, their sense of well-being in life domains of material, health, safety and community, and their knowledge about tourism and tourism development. Obtained information was used to conclude the effects of island tourism impacts on the children's lives. The children were also encouraged to define their life satisfaction and their support for island tourism.

### 1. Demographic profiles of key informants

Total of 15 children were interviewed, six males and nine females. Study participants were of different age, including two children who were 12 years old, three children who were 14 years old, four children who were 16 years old and six young adults who were 17 years old. The study revealed that all children lived on Koh Lanta since they were born. They all acted very lively and friendly. Thirteen children were Muslim, while two practiced Buddhism. They spoke southern Thai language dialect to communicate with family members, friends and other villagers. Their parents had different occupations, such as being employee in a hotel (2), fishermen (4), teacher (2), construction worker (1), agriculturist of rubber plantation (3), owner of bungalow at Klong Toab (1), owner of small grocery (1) and owner of vegetable and fish shop (1).

### 2. Knowledge and understanding about tourism

To check the children's knowledge and understanding of tourism, they were asked to list three words of their own choice related to tourism. The study revealed that the children held good understanding of the tourism industry on the island. They responded confidently

and their answers mostly related to tourism activities and services provided on the island, as well as meet and greet between the locals and tourists. Further, the issue of children-tourist relationship was discussed. All children confirmed being welcoming towards tourists, although they reported feeling disinterested when meeting tourists. Children stated being neither happy, nor hateful towards the tourists. Most children greeted tourists in an international manner “Hello”, while some reported addressing tourists with a Thai greeting “Sawasdee”. All children could communicate using basic English language, but had limitations when communicating in other languages. Children’s most common views were:

*“I want to show tourists about Thai culture so I greeted them - Sawasdee ka” (IC-8).*

*“I spoke with tourists in short sentences when they asked the direction. There are lots of Chinese during high season in November till April. It was very difficult to talk with Chinese because they can’t speak English” (IC-15).*

### 3. Island tourism impacts

All children strongly conveyed the view that the island tourism caused negative economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts on their lives and their communities when counterbalancing against the way tourism helped improve the livelihood of their families and the basic infrastructure on the island. The typical views towards economic impacts were reflected in these statements:

*“My parents do not work in tourism industry. They do not earn much money each month. I don’t think that my family gets any economic benefit from tourism in the island” (IC-5).*

*“My mom complains that the raw vegetable, seafood and meat are expensive” (IC-8).*

*“My parents earn more income in the high season because we have our own bungalow” (IC-7).*

The children were proud that they could help preserve the culture of Koh Lanta. However, they expressed strong dislikes of the island’s tourism development which caused the environmental and socio-cultural problems in their communities. The negative issues mentioned were increased garbage and waste, road accidents, narcotics and bad tourists’ behavior. A variety of views expressed about the environmental costs were:

*“Many buildings were constructed on Koh Lanta. Lots of garbage on the beach and at the national park. Most garbage is from Chinese tourists, not European tourists” (IC-1).*

*“Often, we have a problem of water shortage on the island. Too many hotels.” (IC-3).*

*“We lost many green areas for the hotel and resort construction. The numbers of hotel, bungalow and resort are increasing every year” (IC-10).*

*“Accident. Tourists ride motorbikes carelessly. This seriously caused accidents and death on island. Last month, I lost my friend in the motorbike accident. Tourists killed him. So shocking” (IC-9).*

In addition, the children shared their opinion towards the socio-cultural impacts as follows:

*“During tourist season, Koh Lanta is crowded with people. In the area of the bars, it is so noisy of nightlife entertainment. Tourists drink, smoke and dance with Thai ladies. I think those ladies are not from the island” (IC-4).*

*“Tourist once used to give me marijuana when I worked at the restaurant but I didn’t take it” (IC-15).*

*“We often see tourists hug and mouth kiss and often they are not wearing bras. We can accept but it is better not to have this kind of behavior” (IC-12).*

The respondents were queried on how they perceive the tourist’s culture and behavior. Twelve informants confirmed that they could accept public displays of affection, but not tourists’ revealing clothes. The children also reported feeling uncomfortable to interact with tourists in general. On the other hand, three children showed understanding of the reasons why tourists behave differently from the locals. The children did not judge tourists by their dress code:

*“We should understand tourists. They come from the cold weather area. They love sunshine so they wear bikini, not wearing bras and too revealing cloth and enjoy sunbathing” (IC-13).*

*“I can accept the tourists’ behavior of mouth kiss in the public area and not wearing properly but I don’t want my sisters to see” (IC-14).*

It is worthy to note, the expression of care and attention between tourists elicited positive reactions in the children’s perception:

*“I like when tourists hold hands while walking, especially the elders. They look nice and warm” (IC-6).*

#### 4. Sense of well-being in life domains

The sense of material well-being, health and safety well-being and the community well-being were covered in the interviews as well.

##### 4.1 Perceptions towards the sense of material well-being

The children were first interviewed about their sense of material well-being. Most children asserted their good sense of well-being but they did not relate that good sense in any way to tourism. Only two children acknowledged that the island's tourism thoroughly contributed to their well-being, because their parents worked in hotels and earned family income from tourism-related jobs. The majority of children live with their parents, except three, of which one lives with his mother and the other two live only with their fathers. All children expressed positive perceptions of their own homes and all reported having home cooked dinner with their parents every day. All informants explained being content with the distance between their home and school:

*“I live at Baan Jehlee far from school about 31 kilometers or about 45-minute motorbike ride” (IC-1).*

*“I live at Koh Por. You know Koh Por is a nice island far from Koh Lanta about 20 minutes by boat. I take the boat every day to the pier at Baan Sriraya and then take a motorbike to school just about 5 minutes. Not far. It is Okay for me” (IC-6).*

The children proudly affirmed that they have their own bed rooms. In all families, the parents separated areas for sleeping for male and female children. While not all children reported having internet and computer at home, they were all well informed about the 3G and 4G Internet network provision on the island and how to use the social media applications such as Line, Facebook and Instagram. Only one child had the Internet service connection on his own mobile. In general, all children used the Internet at school. The school provided 20 computers with the Internet connection and two children would share together one computer. Typical views were communicated:

*“I never play any social media and games. I don't see any importance and it costed expensive” (IC-8).*

*“I and my friends know all social media programs. I love chatting on Lines and Facebook. I go to bed quite late around 11.00 p.m.” (IC-14).*

The children were also asked whether they help their families to earn income from any part-time jobs. Some reported having regular part-time job, while some occasionally helped their families. All children stated being happy to work. Thirteen children proudly spoke about their savings while the other two did not have any savings. A variety of views on the business practices of the children were expressed:

*“I live at Koh Por. Every evening after school, I work at the restaurant on Koh Lanta. I get 300 Thai Baht per day, plus tips about 500 Thai Baht per day. Good money. Yes, I am tired but this does not affect my study. I work till 22.00 p.m. every day. I have just started this job only five days. I do my homework during working time when there is no customer at the restaurant” (IC-12).*

*“I helped my father when tourists rent our boat. We traveled with them to islands and did island sightseeing” (IC-5).*

*“I sell hats to tourists. I was responsible for my business alone. I will open my shop at the fairs on Koh Lanta” (IC-10).*

Further, the children were inquired about the frequency of buying any new clothes. All children confirmed their occasional purchase of new clothes. Thirteen Muslim children explained that they had to dress in accordance with their religious teachings. They could choose the clothing style and color as they wanted. All female and male children reported not wearing sarong at home. Sarong is a traditional skirt-like garment made using a long piece of cloth to wrap around the waist or body, usually worn in rural communities. The children also described using the big towel when going to a shower room instead of sarong. Furthermore, the male children reported wearing traditional sarong only when going to the mosque. Additionally, two Buddhist children affirmed wanting to color their hair in golden brown, similarly to the popular Korean movie stars, while 13 Muslim children strongly conveyed that they did not want to have their hair colored.

#### 4.2. Perceptions towards the sense of health and safety well-being

Regarding the sense of health and safety well-being, all children confirmed their good sense of health well-being, influenced by the modern culture rather than the island tourism. The children were further questioned about their safety well-being. They described that the problems of narcotic abuse and road accidents on Koh Lanta critically affected their good sense of safety well-being. It was observed during the interview that all children actively participated in the conversation, demonstrating comfort and high levels of engagement with the researchers. All children identified their school studies as their major anxiety and they consulted their parents and teachers for solutions. Majority of children mentioned that their parents strictly condemn the use of drugs, loafing with friends in the evening and having sexual relationships. Only some children stated differently on the ways their parent taught them:

*“My parents do not prohibit me to have sex but they rather teach me about pros and cons of this concern” (IC-7).*

*“My mom teaches me the pros and cons of having sex. I have to make decision by myself whether to listen to her or break the rule” (IC-12).*

#### 4.3. Perceptions towards the sense of community well-being

The children's perceptions about their sense of community well-being were also investigated. All respondents confirmed that their communities were peaceful. They were happy to live in their communities and often talked to their neighbors and other villagers on the island. Children mentioned being comfortable to ask for help from their neighbors, which confirmed tight knit nature of their community. All informants mentioned that Koh Lanta has a pleasant living environment due to its beautiful nature, beaches and pleasant weather throughout the whole year, as well as interesting attractions related to the island history and the local ways of life.

#### 5. Support for island tourism development

On the subject of the support for island tourism development, 12 children expressed a desire for the number of tourists to rise, because they expected it would increase their parents' incomes and bring better economic condition of Koh Lanta, which would consequently improve their quality of life. However, three children wanted to decrease the number of tourists as they have seen tourists as a cause of the deterioration of the natural resources and the decreasing number of playgrounds. The respondents strongly supported the view that the nature had to be revitalized. They also proposed that more facilities and traffic regulations should be imposed in order to decrease the accident rates caused by tourists. Although the children perceived some of the positive impacts of tourism, those impacts did not soundly influence them to support tourism development on the island. Most children whose parents' occupation was non-related to tourism did not want their parents to work in hotels because they were worried about the safety of their parents and having less time with them. Even the children of hotel employees voiced that they did not like their parents working in a hotel because it reduced their family time:

*“My parents left home very early before I woke up and came back home very late. They were very tired and did not earn much money from hotel salary” (IC-4).*

*“I don’t like to see my dad living home very early. It’s dangerous to ride a motorbike in the very early time” (IA-6).*

However, most children wanted their parents to have their own business related to tourism. Research informants confirmed that they were satisfied with their lives living on the island and asserted their determination to return and develop their mother land after completing higher education. Majority of the respondents did not want to be employed by hotels or any tourism related business but hoped for their own entrepreneurship. Remarkably, children also ascribed more importance and a priority to the income, followed by the culture and environmental preservation. Their major push factor to support tourism were money related matters that would enhance their health and quality of life. All respondents reported supporting tourism if it would bring more direct benefits and better income.

## Discussion

Many contemporary studies examine the perceptions of the local hosts towards the tourism impacts in their communities using quantitative methods. Due to this, the extent of understanding of hosts' perceptions persists undefined (Sharply, 2014). The quantitative research methods significantly obstruct the capability to get a more in-depth understanding of the impacts and their influences on the host community. To gain more in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural impacts, the use of ethnography or phenomenology were recommended in the studies (Deery, Jago & Fredline, 2012). In addition, the UNWTO (1997; 2004) conferred that the extent of the socio-cultural tourism impacts towards the hosts was difficult to measure directly. Therefore, the attitude and opinion of the key informants, especially the locals could be used for the judgement and interpretation of these impacts. In general, the local hosts perceive different socio-cultural impacts (Mason, 2005). Consequently, this study interviewed the school-aged children to gain better understanding of how they perceive the tourism impacts on their island.

Based on the geography of Koh Lanta, tourism development could be characterized as island tourism development due to its characteristics of small geographical size and population (Bojanic & Lo, 2016). With the development of Koh Lanta as a mass-demand destination, the locals' lives were predictably affected by economic, socio-cultural and environmental tourism impacts (Sharpley, 2014; Uysal, Woo & Signal, 2012). The children's perception of tourism impacts shown to be varied, depending on the tourists' length of stay and the location of tourist activities. As an example found in Ban Songpraek, Thailand, the village children perceived many positive tourism benefits with no evidence of cultural disruption or unhealthy effects which well supported their good sense of well-being (Tirasatayapitak et al., 2015), however the children in Koh Lanta reported the undesirable effects of tourism that disrupted their lives.

Since the studied children were members of the communities, they were affected by island tourism development similarly to the adult hosts in other studies (Liburd, Benckendorff & Carlsen, 2012; Uysal, Perdue & Sirgy, 2012). The study results indicated the children's insights of their sense of well-being in life domains of material, health and safety, and community. Maslow (1943) placed the most basic human needs on physiological needs, such as food, shelter, medicine and clothing. Studied children expressed the fulfilment of those basic needs, stating being satisfied with living in their parents' house, having their own bedroom and food prepared by their parents every day. Therefore, the physiological needs as the most basic and important needs of children were clearly fulfilled and confirmed their sense of material well-

being. The children as humans would satisfy their deficiency needs in physiology, safety, belongingness and esteem before moving on to fulfil their needs for self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). In addition, children expressed valuing their mobile phones as important tool for social communication and entertainment, which supported children's status of belonging to the group, social connections and fulfilled their esteem needs. The study also revealed children's sense of safety in family, community and school. This confirmed strong family, community and school bond of children-adults in Koh Lanta communities. Belongingness needs as the last level of deficiency needs were also fulfilled in observed close friendships and a sense of belonging with their neighbors.

Most children in this study affirmed their good sense of well-being in life domains but did not observe how the island tourism influenced such well-being. This could be interpreted as a lack of awareness in children about the ways tourist developments on their island enhanced their parents' opportunities for both direct or indirect incomes, which in turn positively affected the children's well-being in all life domains. The demographic and socioeconomic factors that played significant roles to impact the hosts' perceptions include gender, age, years residing in the community, household income, occupations related or non-related to tourism (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010a; Simão & Môsso, 2013). The greater the economic reliance on tourism activities and benefits obtained, the more enthusiastic the perceptions were (Simão & Môsso, 2013). Hence, the youth whose parents worked in tourism industry and the ones who did the part-time jobs related to tourism would perceive the positive benefits of tourism affected their sense of well-being in life domains and their overall quality of life impacted by island tourism development (Kim et al., 2012).

With regards to the support for tourism, the children-hosts in this study expressed the positive perception of some island tourism effects and value to live in their communities. In children's opinion, own entrepreneurship was the only way forward in their future careers. They assessed that the recent spillover of tourism benefits did not adequately provide their families with the direct advantages and did not healthily produce the overall life satisfaction and good quality of life. Remarkably, informants gave a main concern to the income, followed by the culture and environmental preservation. Their major push factor to support tourism was money stimulus that would in turn enhance their quality of life. It implied that the children host's co-creation of value from island tourism engagement was mostly economic and socio-cultural while the major costs were the environmental impacts (Andersson & Lundberg, 2013; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Stylidis et al., 2014; Woo et al., 2015). The sense of material well-being of the hosts was notably influenced by the economic impacts which additionally

underlined the life satisfaction (Kim et al., 2013) while the positive sociocultural impacts promoted the support for tourism (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). Moreover, the apparent costs of island tourism had the undesirable effects on the support for tourism development (Lee, 2013) and the environmental impact also negatively discouraged the sense of health and safety well-being and the life satisfaction (Kim et al., 2013). In previous studies, the hosts' perceptions of tourism impacts significantly influenced sense of well-being in various life domains, overall life satisfaction and the overall quality of life (Kim et al., 2013). Consequently, the support for island tourism development was to be expected (Uysal et al., 2012). In addition, the locals' satisfaction with neighborhood and the community environments also predicted their support for island tourism development (Nunkoo & Ramkisson, 2010a, 2010b).

## Conclusion and recommendation

Our study concluded that the children support tourism whenever they and their families have more life satisfaction and material well-being from direct tourism economic activities. The more perceived benefits the children had from tourism, the more life satisfaction and support they demonstrated for island tourism development (Choi & Murray, 2010; Numkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). To qualify tourism as a successful tool in developing an island, it should enhance quality of lives of all stakeholders. The stakeholders should come up with a policy to prevent threats of environmental damage from pollution and exploitation of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological health of the island. Additionally, it must be worthwhile that the stakeholders establish a specific policy addressing a conservation of local socio-cultural identities, such as local way of life, traditional clothing, local dialect and national language, indigenous and religious rituals, as well as finding way to engage the children to this process. If at all possible, a responsible authority that aims for a sustainable island destination should recognize that island tourism must improve quality of everyone's life, whether they are adults or children, in the long term and ensure that it preserves a balance between the island's economy, society and environment.

Also, the children's interest in entrepreneurship can serve as an evidence for a need of an educational and occupational policy, one in which focuses on improving the children's

knowledge and skills required for their dreamed career as well as increasing a potential to achieve their material wellbeing. In order to make the aforementioned recommended policies happen, all stakeholders of Koh Lanta's tourism need to set aside their individual economic benefits and to emphasize more on mutual socio-cultural and ecological benefits of the island. A participation of all stakeholders in policy-formulation should also be encouraged thus everyone's voice will be heard of. Through the open-and-fair-to-all policy formulation process, the stakeholders can then discuss about recommended policies with implications of the children's well-beings and make mutual agreement upon it as well as make clear direction of further implementation.

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