

## Exchanges Between Residents and Tourism Development

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### ABSTRACT

*This qualitative study focused on utilizing a combination of social exchange and power theories to explain exchanges that occur between residents of Langkawi and tourism development on the island. The guiding question for this inquiry was "what role does power play in social exchanges that occur between residents and tourism development?" Findings revealed that social exchange is useful in examining residents' attitudes towards tourism as residents indeed based their attitudes on the evaluation of the returns that they receive from the exchanges. More importantly, the findings indicated that residents' general values, their dependence on tourism, and their ability and willingness to adapt moderated the influence of power on residents' evaluation of tourism impacts.*

*Key words: Tourism impact, attitudes of residents, social exchange theory, power, values, and in-depth interviews.*

### ABSTRAK

*Kajian kualitatif ini menjurus kepada penggunaan kombinasi teori pertukaran sosial dan teori kuasa untuk menerangkan pertukaran yang berlaku di antara penduduk Langkawi dengan pembangunan pelancongan di pulau itu. Kajian ini berpandukan kepada persoalan "apakah peranan kuasa dalam pertukaran sosial di antara penduduk dengan pembangunan pelancongan?" Hasil kajian mendapati teori pertukaran sosial boleh digunakan untuk kita menilai sikap penduduk tempatan terhadap pelancongan kerana sikap penduduk dilihat sebagai bergantung kepada penilaian mereka terhadap pulangan yang mereka terima dari pelancongan. Lebih penting lagi, hasil kajian mendapati nilai, kebergantungan mereka kepada pelancongan serta keupayaan dan kemahuan mereka untuk menyesuaikan diri dengan perubahan yang dibawa oleh pelancongan menyerdakan pengaruh kuasa ke atas penilaian yang dibuat oleh penduduk terhadap impak yang dirasakan dari pelancongan.*

## INTRODUCTION

Understanding residents' attitudes towards tourism and what it does to their lives help in managing tourism development in a sustainable manner. This requires explaining the ambivalence among residents regarding the impact of tourism in their areas and communities. For example, Belisle and Hoy (1980) reported that residents in their study perceived that tourism had not disrupted their way of life. However the findings by Rothman (1978) in an earlier study indicated that residents perceived that tourism had caused an increasingly hectic community and personal lives. However, the authors of these studies were unable to explain any particular constellation of variables that could account for the differences in the residents' attitudes. Why is economic dependency important in predicting the residents' attitudes towards tourism in Cape Cod (Pizam, 1978) but not important in predicting the residents' attitudes in Santa Marta (Belisle and Hoy, 1980)?

Residents' acceptance of tourism development in their communities depends on their gains from the development. Residents are indeed 'exchanging' parts of their resources with the tourists and their level of acceptance of tourism depends on their evaluations of these exchanges. The current case study explored the use of social exchange theory to explain attitudes of residents in Langkawi towards tourism development in Langkawi. Social exchange theory has been used in an earlier study undertaken by Jurowski et al. (1997) but no studies have been done to explore what variables influence residents' evaluations of the exchange. This paper reviews the

theoretical foundation of the social exchange approach in understanding residents' attitudes and presents the results of the case study which was based on this approach.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Understanding Residents' Attitudes*

Several approaches for understanding the determinants of residents' attitudes towards tourism have been suggested. Allen *et al.* (1988), used the tourism cycle development approach in their study to explore the relationship between stages of tourism development and residents' general satisfaction with community life in 20 rural Colorado communities. In their conclusions, the authors explained that each community is different, and the tolerance for tourism activity will depend upon several factors including the economic, social, and environmental resources of the community. The study also indicated that residents were not homogeneous in terms of their attitudes towards tourism, a point overlooked by the models proposed by Doxey (1976) and Butler (1980).

Similar to the conclusion arrived by Allen, Long, Purdue & Kieselbach (1988), Lankford and Howard suggested that understanding residents' attitudes towards tourism requires the consideration of "the complexity of factors that can influence, either positively or negatively, residents' attitudes towards tourism" (Lankford & Howard, 1994:135). They argued that by segmenting the residents based on certain variables, explaining the differences in their attitudes would be easier. They developed a multiple item tourism impact attitude scale to assess the effects of selected independent variables cited in the literature on resident

attitudes towards tourism development in the Columbia River Gorge region of Oregon and Washington. Lankford and Howard (1994) found that the extent to which local residents felt they maintained some level of control over the planning and development of the tourism process favorably influenced attitudes towards tourism. The results of their study also revealed that if local residents felt that increasing numbers of tourists impinged on their access to and use of preferred outdoor recreational areas, their attitudes towards tourism development diminished dramatically. Additionally, their findings also supported earlier findings by Pizam (1978) that the more dependent residents are on tourists for their economic well-being, the more supportive they are of its growth and development.

The segmentation approach indeed help overcome the weakness of the development cycle framework, which assumes that residents are homogeneous in their reactions towards tourism development. A pattern consisting of several common explanatory factors emerge from the two studies above, i.e, the relative costs and values brought about by the tourists as perceived by the different segments of residents influence their attitudes towards tourism. How residents assess the costs and benefits of tourism plays a role in determining their attitudes, a suggestion offered by social exchange theory.

Social exchange theory refers to voluntary actions of individuals who are motivated by the returns they expect to receive and typically do in fact receive from others (Blau, 1967). With these returns acting as goals, an individual or a party engages in an exchange of resources or favors with another. Social exchange is based

on the principle that one person does a favor for another while there is a general expectation of some future return, its exact nature is not stipulated in advance. In every exchange transaction, each participant's goal is to gain as much as possible at little cost (Blau, 1967). Since the future return from an exchange is unspecified, the individual's decision to enter into a social exchange depends on 'perceived' rewards and 'perceived' costs that the individual expects from the exchange. The individual will choose to be involved in the exchange if the perceived rewards from the exchange exceed the perceived costs from it (Skidmore, 1975).

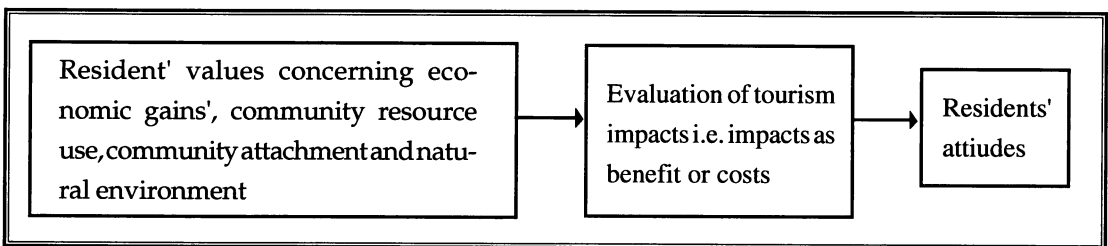
Ap (1992) introduced a model of social exchange process to help facilitate understanding of residents' perceptions of tourism. The process begins with need satisfaction as the driving force behind the exchange. According to Ap (1992), it is assumed that the driving force for a community in developing tourism is to improve the economic, social, and psychological well-being of its residents. This is the basic rationale used by many governments to justify their decisions to develop tourism in their countries. The driving force for tourism development may not come from the residents themselves, but it may be imposed upon them through the decisions of others. The residents, then, will evaluate the benefits and costs that they perceive they will receive from tourism and determine whether they are in favor of tourism (want to 'exchange' with tourists) or not. As long as residents perceive that tourism brings more benefits than costs to them, they will view them favorably. But if tourism is perceived to create costs that impinge on them adversely, they may develop negative attitudes towards tourism in their

communities. Studies have shown that residents will support tourism if they perceive that tourism brings more benefits than costs (Rothman, 1978; Thomason, Crampton, & Kamp, 1979); Milman & Pizam, 1988).

Jurowski *et al.* (1997) established a framework using social exchange theory to examine residents' attitudes towards tourism. Based on their study, it was found that residents' attitudes were determined by their evaluation of

of tourism impacts, which was in turn influenced by their values (Figure 1). Thus, residents who were more ecocentric, for example, perceived tourism unfavorably as they perceived tourism affects the physical environment negatively. Jurowski *et al.* (1997) suggested further research to study what influences residents to view a specific impact as a benefit or a cost and how the evaluation of the tourism impacts affects resident attitudes.

**Figure 1**  
Framework for Understanding Residents' Attitudes Towards Tourism



Established by Jurowski *et al.* (1997).

#### *Power and Social Exchange*

To expand the framework above, which is based on social exchange theory, it is critical to consider an important variable that plays an influential role in any exchange, namely power. In fact, the findings from Lankford and Howard's (1994) study have hinted that power, as explained by the extent of control it has in tourism planning, determined how residents felt towards tourism development. Ap (1992) also suggested the inclusion of power in the study of residents' perceptions towards tourism impact. Power, according to him, is the central variable of exchange as it provides the basis for determining the form of the exchange relation. Ap (1992), proposed that residents with high levels of power were at the more ad-

vantageous position than those with low levels of power as they were more able to obtain something that they value from the exchange (i.e. from tourism development), and thus they will have more positive attitudes towards tourism development than those with low levels of power. This proposition is slightly inconsistent with a suggestion put forth by Blau (1967) regarding the role of power in an exchange.

According to Blau (1967), although social exchange, which refers to voluntary actions of individuals that are motivated by the returns they are expected to receive, requires trusting others to reciprocate, what B gives to A in exchange for whatever A gives to B may not be equivalent in value. There is a possibility that A

may not have other alternatives but to exchange with B. Thus, Blau (1967) proposed that the partner in a social exchange with fewer alternative opportunities tends to be more dependent on and committed to the exchange relation than the other. This explains why a resident who is faced with poverty and the need to survive (i.e. who is 'power-less') may not be in favor of tourism but still commit to exchanges with tourists and, in fact, expresses positive attitudes towards tourism. As compared to Ap (1992), this leads to a proposition that residents with low levels of power will *also* reveal positive attitudes towards tourism; but instead of favoring tourism because they are at the advantageous position to obtain something that empower them like those with high levels of power, these residents are in favor of tourism because they are powerless and because they are dependent on tourism.

Power may be conceptualized generally as 'all forms of successful control by A over B, that is, of A securing B's compliance' (Lukes, 1974: 17). In the context of understanding residents' attitudes towards tourism, power is the residents' ability to secure returns from having tourism in their community. But

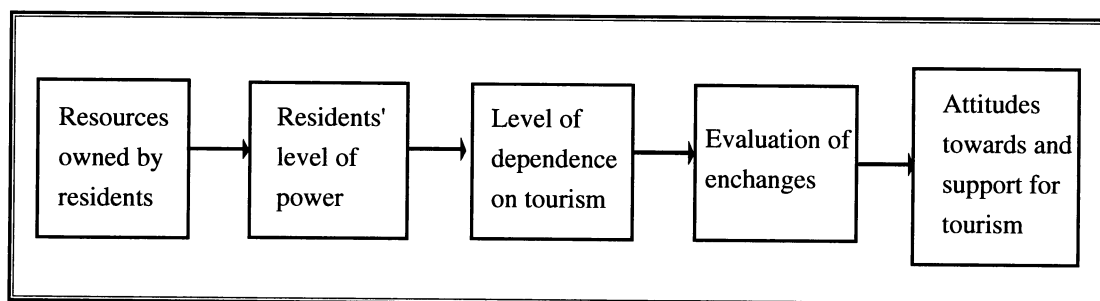
how do we measure this ability or power? To answer this question requires one to consider the source of power.

A resource is anything, such as property, money, skills, competence, or knowledge, owned by an individual that " can be made available to others as instrumental to the satisfaction of their needs" (Wolfe, 1959: 100). The resources owned by residents may be a source of power (Harsanyi, 1971; Nagel, 1975) as they dictate the residents' ability to influence the tourism development process in order to satisfy their needs. Resources represent power that residents can use to satisfy their needs from the exchange with tourism development. Resources, then, are crucial considerations in the exchange process involving residents and tourism development.

The above review leads to a proposition that power, which is explained by the resources owned by residents, determines whether residents evaluate tourism impacts as positive or negative through its influence on residents' ability to benefit from tourism and on residents' level of dependence on tourism for their livelihood (Figure 2). This proposition is the the guide for the present study.

**Figure 2**

Conceptual Framework for Understanding Residents' Attitudes Towards Tourism



### *Tourism in Langkawi Island*

Located in northwest Malaysia, Langkawi Island is endowed with beautiful beaches, natural flora and fauna, and a tropical climate; all the good reasons for Langkawi to become an attractive tourist destination. Prior to the late 1980s, when tourism began to be developed on a large scale by the local and federal governments, Langkawi was one of the least developed districts in the state of Kedah with the majority of the residents making their living by fishing or growing rice (Din, 1990). On January 1, 1987, the federal government conferred the Duty Free Port status to Langkawi. This has, to a large extent, hastened economic growth, especially in creating opportunities for the business, commercial, and service sectors of Langkawi.

Some of the local residents may connect the sudden development to the legendary local beauty, Mahsuri, who put Langkawi under a curse when she was condemned to death for not being faithful to her husband while he was away at war against the Siam (Mohamed Shariff, 1980). There are many versions on how her death sentence was carried out. One version claims that as the executioner plunged his 'kris' (Malay dagger) into Mahsuri, who was tied to a tree, white blood spurted from her body. Astonished, the villagers quickly untied the near dead Mahsuri. Lifting her hands to the sky, Mahsuri presaged that prosperity would elude Langkawi for seven generations to come (North Review, 1995). Soon after her death, Langkawi did observe a decline in its prosperity, as described by a local historian, "...even grass refused to grow on the island" (Mohamad Shariff, 1980). The sudden prosperity due to the aggressive tourism

development could have marked the end of the curse. True or not, the legend and Mahsuri's grave add to the attraction of the island.

The Langkawi Residential/Socioeconomic Study 1999 reports that the majority (33.8 percent) of the present working population in Langkawi is involved in the wholesaling and retailing sector and only 19 percent of the working population is engaged in the agricultural, forestry, hunting, and fishery industries (Langkawi Island Development Authority, 1999). This indicates a tremendous change from the situation in 1987 when the economic base of Langkawi was still dominated by the agricultural/fishery sector with 63% of the population at that time employed in this sector (Langkawi District Council, 1992). The bulk of tourism businesses, including hotels and catering, are included under the wholesaling and retailing sector.

Langkawi Island is divided into 6 mukims (districts), namely Kuah, Padang Matsirat, Ayer Hangat, Bohor, Ulu Melaka, and Kedawang. All 6 districts were considered as the study sites for this study.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed the constructionist research paradigm, which is broadly known in current jargon as "naturalistic inquiry" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This paradigm competes with positivism, which tends to emphasize quantification in its methods. The methods used in constructionism are typically qualitative and aim at providing a rich portrait and a better understanding of the phenomenon un-

der study than the more traditional quantitative methods (Hernandez, Cohen & Garcia, 1996). A qualitative approach was chosen for this study as the study was looking for patterns in order to help explain residents' attitudes. An in-depth probe would be more valuable than surface understanding, and there was a need to have contact with the residents themselves in order to understand how tourism had influenced them (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Jurowski *et al.* (1997) also recommend the use of this approach in order to reveal elements that *residents* (as opposed to researchers) feel they might be exchanging in return for the benefits of tourism development.

Qualitative designs can either be loose (unstructured) or tight (prestructured). The research design used in this study lies between these two extremes. The study has a conceptual framework, a sampling design, and a procedure determined at the beginning of the study. The study collected information primarily from residents with different power levels on Langkawi Island, Malaysia regarding their perceptions of the changes brought by tourism development to their lives and their attitudes towards tourism development in Langkawi. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with thirty residents from the 'power' group and sixteen residents from the 'no-power' group.

The sampling strategy adopted in this study was a purposeful one. Unlike probability sampling that allows for statistical generalizing to the population of interest, non-probability such as the one utilized in this study uses subjective judgement to determine the units of the population to be included in the sample. Qualitative samples tend to be

purposeful, rather than random. Miles and Huberman (1994) explain that this tendency is because social processes, which qualitative research are mostly interested in, "...have a logic and a coherence that random sampling can reduce to uninterpretable sawdust" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus, choices of the sample are being driven by the conceptual questions, not by a concern for 'representativeness'. Based on an interview with an informant who is a local anthropologist, it was established that the 'power' group would consist of residents with resource(s) which they could use as an exchange for the benefits from tourism namely ownership of land, access to capital (access to income, savings, assets, and other financial resources that could be used as capital), knowledge level, young age, and leadership position while the 'no-power' group would consist of residents with none of the resources. This sampling strategy was used as the study aimed to compare how 'power' and 'no-power' residents evaluate the tourism impacts.

An interview guide was used during the interviews, which were audio-taped. The taped interviews were transcribed and qualitatively analyzed. The data were analyzed to explore how power influences residents' attitudes. The data were also analyzed to discover other determinants of residents' attitudes that may contribute to the study objectives.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

All respondents in the 'power' group, except for three, expressed favorable attitudes and support towards tourism in Langkawi. Among the respondents of the 'power' group who were

favorable toward tourism, seven of them strongly supported tourism and wanted to see expansion in tourism development in Langkawi while nine of them wanted to see some control over the development. Fifteen out of the sixteen

respondents in the 'no-power' group were favorable of tourism in Langkawi. Among them, eight strongly supported tourism and four supported tourism but wanted to see it be controlled. Table 1 summarizes the above findings.

**Table 1**  
Summary of Respondents' Attitudes Towards Tourism

Attitudes	Power Group		No-Power Group	
	Respondent	Total	Respondent	Total
Very favorable (benefits from tourism far outweigh its costs)	7, 14, 19, 31, 42, 44	7	1, 8, 10, 25, 28, 36, 39, 45	8
Favorable (benefits from tourism outweigh its costs)	2, 15, 21, 27, 30, 32, 34, 35, 37, 40, 41, 46	11	13, 26, 29	3
Favorable but wants more control (benefit and costs of tourism have equal weight)	4, 9, 11, 16, 20, 22, 23, 24, 43	9	6, 12, 33, 38	4
Not favorable (costs of tourism far outweigh its benefits)	3, 15, 17	3	18	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>30</b>		<b>16</b>

The findings of this study more closely resemble Blau's (1967) proposition than Ap's (1992). The study found that, as opposed to Ap's proposition, the percentage of 'no-power' respondents who were favorable of tourism was much higher than the percentage of 'power' respondents who were favorable of tourism. The reason for this could be that the 'no-power' respondents were not totally in the 'disadvantaged' situation, as they did not perceive that the exchanges as being unfair, as Ap had suggested.

#### *Power, Dependency and Respondents' Evaluations of Impacts*

There are two ways for residents to benefit

from tourism: by obtaining jobs that are made available by tourism development or by becoming entrepreneurs, since tourism opens up new business opportunities. Both tourism development and the duty-free status have created a suitable condition for businesses to flourish in Langkawi. Businesses related to tourism, retailing, construction, souvenirs, traditional medicine, and telecommunication have grown ever since the government began a serious effort to develop Langkawi as a tourism destination and a duty-free port. The effort includes the development of projects such as golf courses, accommodation, commercial establishments, and recreational facilities. Development of apartments and cha-

lets can be observed in the Pantai Cenang and Pantai Tengah areas. Meanwhile, shopping and commercial complexes and recreational attractions have mushroomed in Kuah. In fact, plans are under way to have more commercial and business establishments in other areas such as in Padang Lalang and Padang Matsirat (North Review, 1995). These developments have opened up employment and business opportunities, but most respondents did not believe that these opportunities are opened for just everybody. They believed that, in order to receive these benefits, residents must have certain resources. Among the resources mentioned by the respondents were capital, young age, knowledge, land, influence, connections, access to information, vision, and effort.

To take up business opportunities made available by tourism development requires one to have capital. Capital is defined here as accumulated stock of wealth (money or property) used by a person in business (Samuelson, Nordhaus & Mandel, 1995). Seventeen of the thirty 'power' respondents spoke of the importance of capital in determining whether one can start a business. Meanwhile, fourteen of the sixteen 'no-power' respondents explained that lack of capital was the reason they had not started their own businesses, as shown by the following excerpts:

*"...those who have money or land, many of them have opened their own businesses, built chalets, etc." (Power)*

*"Other people really have the opportunity because they have...money." (Power)*

*"Those who have capital...they know how to develop their lives." (Power)*

*"I do not take part in it (business)...Where do we get money to build chalets?" (No-power).*

*"Really, the thought (of opening a business) has come to me, but the problem is that I do not have the capital." (No-power).*

Many respondents indicated that residents who sold off their land, which appreciated in value due to tourism development, were better able to take advantage of the business opportunities as they were able to come up with their own capital. But capital was not the only requirement that respondents perceived one must have in order to gain from tourism development in Langkawi. Several respondents thought that jobs created by the tourism industry are mostly tailored to those who are young. Tourism related jobs and small businesses require skills and physiological characteristics owned by the younger generation on Langkawi. These jobs also require some level of education that many older residents do not possess. In addition, an elderly respondent from the 'no-power' group observed that being old also minimized one's chances to be given the opportunity to benefit from tourism. When he tried to apply for a shop lot from the local authority, he was told that his application had to be declined because of his old age. He said, *"For me, I don't see any way I am able to do anything. But for the young people, I think they should try to make the best of it. I did put my name for the application (for a shop lot), but they said that as I was already 70 years old, I was too old to be given a shop."*

A relationship is established between power and residents' dependency on tourism

for their livelihoods. Almost all of the respondents from both groups were found to be dependent on tourism. However, the results indicate a difference in the way these two groups depend on tourism. Respondents with fewer resources, especially those who had to face economic hardships before tourism development, perceived that tourism had created opportunities that allowed them to escape the hardships. They then became dependent on tourism for the earnings with which their lives became economically better. Respondents with more resources indicated that they were dependent on tourism to earn more. The study concludes that although the two groups evaluated the benefits and costs differently, their attitudes towards tourism were the same: tourism is good for Langkawi in general. The following excerpts illustrate this finding:

*"Last time when there were not so many tourists and not many people, money (income) was also hard. I could not even get a hundred ringgit in sales a day. But, sales are good today."* (Power).

*"I used to...worked in the (padi) fields and did odd jobs. Sometimes I did not have any money at all...But since tourism started to be developed on a big scale in Langkawi, I am able to earn better..."* (No-Power).

The results also revealed that power and level of dependence contributed to the value held by residents, which in turn determined how residents evaluated the impacts brought by tourism. Those who were dependent on tourism were found to put high value on economic returns over religion and maintaining

their culture. For example, low-income parents whose children work because of tourism development put high value on the money that these children brought into the households. An elderly man who described himself as poor expressed his relief with the existence of tourism in Langkawi, *"Youngsters whose parents are poor like us are all working. The young people now can afford to buy motorcycles...and some can even buy cars"*. Although it cannot be concluded that these parents put lower value on religion and culture, this result indicates that they put higher value on the money compared to parents who have higher incomes. The low-income parents indicated dependence on tourism and perceived youngsters in Langkawi as being productive and helpful.

*Values and Respondents' Evaluations of Impacts* Similar to the conclusions made by Jurowski *et al.* (1997), the results of the present study show that values held by residents contributed to their evaluation of tourism impacts. Residents who valued what their religion dictates about appropriate behavior above all else were reluctant to show support for the impacts of tourism. A 'power' respondent represents this finding when he expressed his concern about the social deviance problem that he claimed started from tourism, *"I don't deny that they (Langkawi residents) have more income now...But at the same time their generations are ruined...we cannot evaluate everything based on money"*. Meanwhile residents who put high values on economic gains from tourism indicated dependence on and support for tourism. It can be concluded that while power contributed to the values held by residents, these values, in turn, contributed to residents'

evaluation of tourism impacts. This conclusion confirms the value-system model proposed by Cole (1995). Values, according to Cole, are the foundations of the system and are formed under various influences in the external world, such as parents, teachers, the media etc, and by the internal forces, such as personality and intelligence (Cole, 1995: 116). In the case of Langkawi residents' evaluation of tourism impacts, residents' value systems may be influenced by the power they possess and their level of dependence on tourism. These value systems also influence residents' adaptations to tourism impacts.

#### *Adaptation and Respondents' Evaluations of Impacts*

The study also found that residents' evaluation of tourism impacts is influenced by their ability and willingness to adapt. Those who viewed adaptation positively and who were willing to adapt to the changes brought by tourism indicated that tourism brought more benefits than costs. Interestingly, the results indicated that the degree of residents' dependence on tourism influences their ability and willingness to adapt. Examples of adaptations in the interviews included becoming accustomed to the culture of tourists ("At the beginning, yes it was a shock with the different cultures brought in by the tourists...the people have become used to it"- power, high degree of dependence), changing of lifestyles ("...the behavior of the younger people are not favored by...the older generation. But...they do not mind...I think this is a part of development"- power, high degree of dependence), and income and price increases ("High prices? I do not feel that prices of goods are high in Langkawi...we all can afford

it"- no-power, high degree of dependence).

Many individuals and parties claimed that unhealthy influence brought into Langkawi by the outsiders due to tourism is a loss to the residents as it had increased social problems (Kayat, 2000). Such problems are termed as the 'demonstration effect' where, according to Greenwood (1972) the presence of tourists arouses the desire of the locals to imitate the behavior they see especially that which violates the standards of their own community. The demonstration effect is in most cases seen as the principal causative factor of change in community values brought by tourism and thus is often invoked to arouse negative emotions about tourism.

But several respondents in the study asserted that changes in their values will happen sooner or later. Young respondents seemed to desire the changes, as is reflected by one of them, "Socially the people of Langkawi have changed. They seem to be more dynamic now and more...forward thinking...We should not be backward anymore. Outside influences have caused these changes." As a young man, this respondent believed that the changed behaviour among the adolescents indicated development. According to him, "...the behaviors of the (younger) people are not favored by others especially the older generation. But...the older generation do not seem to mind...I think this is part of development...it does not bother me. We do silly things, but these things do not harm anybody."

Lastly, although several respondents agreed that prices of goods in Langkawi have increased because of tourism, they indicated that the increase does not pose a threat to them. Burns and Holden (1995) wrote that many residents in different tourism destinations try to cope with changes brought by

tourism to their lives. The increase in their earnings have allowed Langkawi residents to adapt to the higher prices, just as residents in Delaware were able to adapt to the inconveniences caused by tourism (Rothman, 1978).

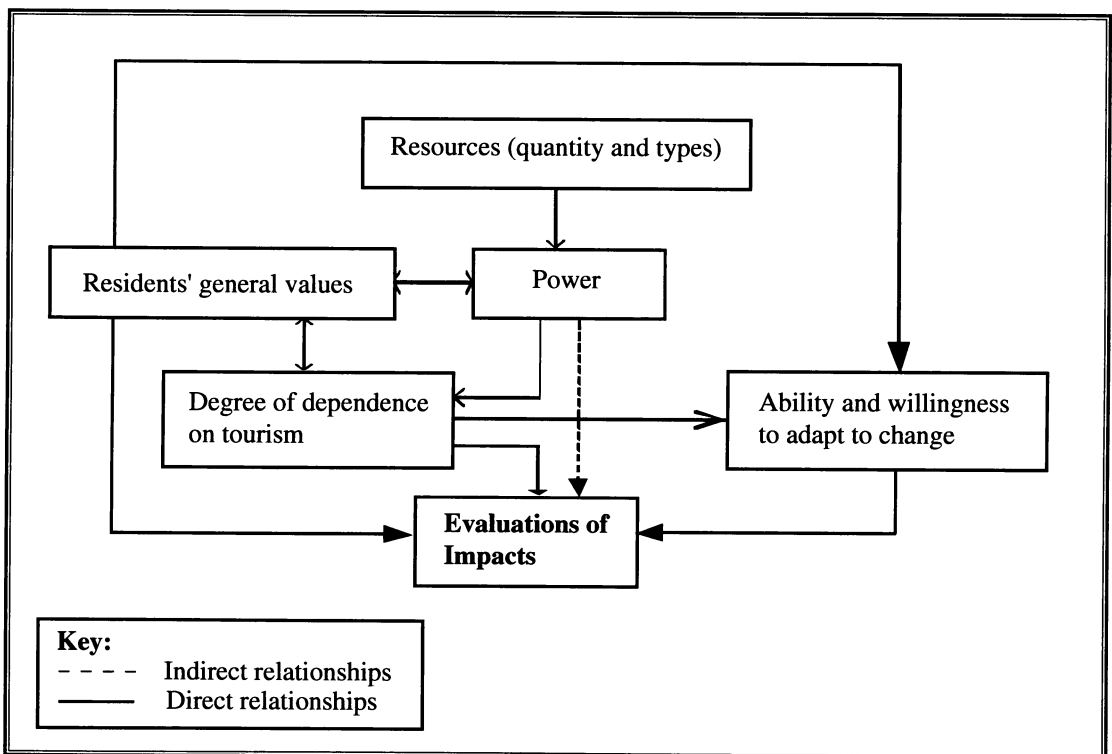
### CONCLUSIONS

Social exchange theory is useful in examining residents' attitudes towards tourism because during their exchange with tourism, residents

of tourism impacts. Power, which depends on resources owned by the residents, has an indirect effect on the evaluation of impacts.

Residents' general values (about religion, equity, culture, resources, and the environment), their dependence on tourism, and their ability and willingness to adapt seem to have more direct influence on the evaluation of impacts than power. These intervening variables moderate the influence of power, as operationalized in this study. These relationships are indicated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**  
Inter-relationship of Variables that Determine Residents Attitudes' Towards Tourism



This study marks the early stage in the building of a theoretical framework. The concept explored by the variables discovered from

this study can be used to build a theoretical framework, which may account for the impacts perceived by the host residents. This

theoretical framework, which is based on social exchange and power theories, lays the groundwork for forthcoming studies in the realm of tourism social impacts of tourism.

The findings from the study also hold many implications for tourism destination management decisions and evaluations. To ensure successful tourism development, planners and policymakers must understand the issues that arise due to the development of tourism. The fundamental policy option is not whether a community should be 'for' or 'against' tourism, but whether tourism will bring the desired degree of 'progress' with the least undesirable impacts to the community, at present and in the future. When there is no opposition from the residents towards tourism development, it does not necessarily indicate that tourism development has brought the desired degree of 'progress' nor does it indicate that tourism brings no harm. It is important to study what factors determine the attitudes residents have with regard to tourism.

Tourism development in Langkawi can be looked at as a process of societal transformation in an attempt to remove it from economic constraints. Exchanges between the members of this community and the impacts from tourism are influenced by power, a variable that shapes and directs the exchange. This variable also dictates who among the members of the community gets what, how much, and how.

Residents' attitudes about the transformation of the community in which they belong to is a function of their evaluations regarding this transformation. Power owned by these residents has an effect on how much they can get from this transformation and on how

they evaluate the consequences of this transformation. 'Powerless' residents facing economic hardship may value the earning opportunity created by tourism higher than the environment, the social traditions, neighbours, and future generations. They may adapt with the transformation and when asked about their attitudes towards tourism development in Langkawi, they would most probably say, "Tourism is the best thing that has ever happened to Langkawi since Mahsuri".

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