

Resident's Perceived Impacts Onkelantan International Kite Festivals: A Qualitative Enquiry

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Abstract

Kelantan International Kite Festival (KIKF) is hosted by Kelantan State Government annually as one of the many products to attract tourists and visitors to the state as well as to provide recreational activities to local residents. Since first hosting it 37 years ago, the state believes that the festival is an important showcase of Kelantan Malay tradition and cultural heritage. However, no systematic investigation has been undertaken, thus far to understand the perceptions held by local residents towards the festival. Understanding resident perceptions are crucial in the process of promoting any local resources, including cultural resource, in tourism development. Using qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with the residents, this study examines residents' perceived impacts of KIKF. Specifically, this study was focused in understanding major impacts brought by KIKF as perceived by residents and whether these perceived impacts echo those mentioned by existing literature. Findings from this study indicate that respondents have the positive spirit with regards to KIKF especially because they perceive that KIKF has the potential to preserve their cultural traditions. This festival is something that the residents look forward for every year even when they know that the festival causes traffic congestion and that outsiders are the ones benefitting from it economically.

Keywords: Kelantan international kite festival; Perceived impacts; Art; Cultural and heritage; Social and economic impacts.



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1. Introduction

Nowadays, the number of people travelling to acquire knowledge about other culture is growing. Aided by information and technology, cultural tourists are able to enjoy virtual experience related to art, cultures, and heritage. It created an early perception about others culture and lead to the rise of experiential travel. This process stimulates people to purchase a travel package around the world to experience the authenticity of cultural activities rather than just watch people in their social network visiting amazing cultural and heritage places around the globe. This phases made culture and heritage traditions as attractive commodities for modern tourism destination development (Kvam, 2011; Omar, 2013).

The above situation reflects the change in tourist behaviour pattern whereby tourists nowadays prefer authentic destinations that offer eternity experiences Moutinho (2016), as well as destinations that positively affected their social life (Mondal, 2015). This changing pattern is used by Kelantan to offer Kelantan International Kite Festival (KIKF) as a tourism attraction, other than the other unique culture, traditional arts, and crafts. KIKF is an annual kite-theme festival that aims to promote and preserve kite as traditional games that truly represent local identities of Kelantan Malay (Mohd, 2011). Together with the promotion of kite, other cultural activities, crafts, traditional games, traditional foods, and traditional lifestyles of Kelantan Malay are also showcased and promoted during the festival, making the festival as a cultural tourist product to attract tourists and visitors. The effort to promote and preserve these art and heritage resources is significant, as it does not only represent Kelantan Malay per say, but Malaysian heritage as a whole, as many forms of Malaysian heritage (such as kite playing, Malay crafts like painting, sculpture, pottery, woodcarving and so on) were originated from Kelantan (Shuaib, 2013).

Kelantan arts and heritage become internationally recognised as it has been listed in the protected worlds' living heritage programme introduced by UNESCO (2005). As for information, UNESCO has introduced a programme which known as "The Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity". This programme specifically designed to increase awareness about intangible heritage and enhancing it throughout the world UNESCO (2005). Fortunately, UNESCO's proclamation served as a valuable turning point for Kelantan arts and heritage. It forced Kelantan to persistently conserve their cultural, arts and heritage as it is known as fragile heritage and the threat of extinction UNESCO (2005).

In the effort to conserve this heritage, marketing of these arts and heritage resources, including kite flying as tourist products should consider communities' point of view, as they are the steward of these resources which need to be passed on to their next generation. Their perceptions towards the inclusions of these arts and heritage resources in

KIKF need to be considered and studied as these perceptions would determine their reactions towards the organisation of the festival i.e. in supporting the festival. Conceptually, if residents perceive that KIKF would benefit them and increase their quality of life, they are more likely to have positive reactions or support towards KIKF. Otherwise, residents who perceive KIKF as problematic will oppose the festival organisation as according to, [Giulianotti et al. \(2015\)](#), residents will oppose tourism programs that they perceive as problematic.

Particularly, resident's opposition may lead to project deferments, legal actions, abandonment of the project, and most importantly, failure in achieving the festival's purpose of creating benefits for the local community ([Brida et al., 2011](#); [Do et al., 2012](#)). Resident reactions affect the festival's sustainability, and these reactions are rooted in their perceptions toward marketing this festival as a tourist product. Therefore, it is important to understand resident perceptions towards the festival and the impacts as it can possibly bring the success of a tourism product development, including event organization.

Event success is influenced by the relationship between tourist and host, and it relies on locals' positive reaction including their support ([Muller, 2012](#); [Sher et al., 2015](#)). Without resident support, tourism development may face problems in the development process [Homsud and Promsaard \(2015\)](#), as resident reactions toward the development significantly influence the development of policies in a related industry ([Nunkoo, 2016](#)). Thus, understanding resident perceptions should be the prerequisite for the process of promoting any local resources in tourism development, including promoting culture and heritage resources through events organized as a tourist product. How, why and in what conditions residents react to the impacts of tourism development are still unclear ([Nunkoo, 2016](#)). Moreover, perceptions towards impacts produced by events change with time [Kaplanidou et al. \(2013\)](#) and types of event. Thus, a specific study to understand resident perceptions towards the impacts brought by KIKF is worth to be conducted.

This study examines resident's perceived impacts of KIKF hosted by Kelantan Tourist Information Center (KTIC) along the Geting Beach. Geting Beach is located in Tumpat district, in the state of Kelantan. Using qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews with the residents, researcher explored the impacts they perceived from the festival as well as impacts that influence their support of the festival. Specifically, this study was interested in understanding what major impacts do residents perceived KIKF to create and whether these perceived impacts gathered through the interviews echo the major impacts mentioned in the existing literature. The residents in the study were probed to express their opinions on the importance of KIKF and their support in the organization of this festival.

2. Resident perceptions Toward Events

Several studies have looked into resident perceptions of the impact of events on the communities that residing around the event venues or communities that are the 'stewards' of the event resources. The majority of the studies were quantitatively examined. For example, [Negrusa et al. \(2016\)](#) examined the resident perception of the effects of the Transilvania International Film Festival in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. Based on exploratory and descriptive analyses, the study found that the festival emphasizes the positive effects at the socio-cultural level. The festival provides multiple possibilities to spend free time in a pleasant way, it sustains the development of cultural life, and it improves the educational and the cultural level of community. Moreover, the festival does not influence, in a negative manner, the moral principles of the society and it does not generate an increase in the crime rate. From the economic point of view, the festival has the capacity to attract investments and additional revenues for the local government, it sustains the development of the city infrastructure, and it creates opportunities for residents to develop new economic activities. Lastly, from the environmental point of view, the festival sustains the improvement of environmental issues, it does not generate important traffic problems, and it does not deteriorate touristic resources. Using a similar approach, [Muller \(2012\)](#) undertook a questionnaire survey of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi and found that residents perceived the event as important for image improvement.

A study conducted by [Remoaldo et al. \(2016\)](#) proposed that the 2012 European Capital of Culture is important in the context of community benefits as it provides investment and immaterial benefits, improves safety and infrastructures, provides positive changes in traditional practice and habits of residents as well as provides economic and social benefits to the residents. [Hung \(2015\)](#), studied the 2014 Taiping Loquat Festival in Taiwan and found that the event was perceived by the residents to have increased farmer's income and raised local visibility that positively affected the development of local industries. In addition, the festival was believed to have increased residents' own understanding of their hometown. However, several residents expressed suspicion and opposition toward the benefits said to be brought by the event.

All of the studies discussed in the preceding paragraphs regard economic impacts (such as [Negrusa et al. \(2016\)](#); [Muller \(2012\)](#)) and social benefits ([Hung, 2015](#); [Muller, 2012](#); [Remoaldo et al., 2016](#)) as two crucial categories of resident perceptions toward events organized within their communities. These two major impacts have also been identified by other studies.

2.1. Economic Impacts

[Davies et al. \(2013\)](#), simplify economic impact as the economic contribution of a given industry or activity in a defined locality area or community. However, in the context of events organized in a community, the economic impact is the contribution of the event to total spending, output income and employment ([Tyrrell and Johnston, 2006](#)). [Gratton et al. \(2000\)](#), explain that researchers aiming to measure the economic impact of events should first classify the event types, as not all are important in economic terms. For example, a one off-major international spectator event may provide a more significant economic impact as compared to an annual cycle of events.

Taks *et al.* (2011), examined the economic impact of the Pan –American Junior Athletic Championships in Canada and found that non-local visitor spending contributes to revenue for the local organizing committee while the cost includes money spent to build the stadium, cost of borrowing money from the institution, import, and ticket sales to locals. Yang *et al.* (2010) verified that the economic impacts of the 2010 Expo in Shanghai outweigh the costs incurred. It created opportunities for new investments in Shanghai by attracting visitors and investors which stimulated business opportunities thus creating income and employment for the local.

2.2. Social Impacts

While investigating the social impacts of events hosted in Shanghai, Liu (2016) found the common positive social impacts perceived by residents to include image and status building; establishment of international exchange and cooperation; economic and tourism development, as well as infrastructure development. Simultaneously, they found that the events cause inconvenience in residents' daily lives; environment pollution and a threat to security. In their study, Xie *et al.* (2013) found that events have the potential to cause traffic congestion, give pressure on local services such as fire/police department, increase crime, pollution, and crowding.

Yang *et al.* (2010), investigated the host community's reaction to the 2010 Expo in Shanghai. Sixteen impacts items were summarized into three major themes: city image enhancement and consolidation; tourism infrastructure development; and culture exchange. While the cost of events has been identified as, bring disturbance by visitors, increase traffic problems, increase the crime rate, as well as causing increasing alcoholism.

3. Methodology

The main purpose of the study, which is to explore how residents' perceived the impacts of KIKF allow researchers to employ a qualitative approach. Using in-depth semi-structured interviews, the researcher interviewed six local residents as respondents. This approach enables probing between interviewees and interviewers, giving interviewees greater response leeway and generating more material for the researcher's analysis. The respondents were selected based on their knowledge of KIKF. Those who have the knowledge, and aware about KIKF are considered as qualified respondents. The interview was conducted in a room without any interruption from other people. All responses were tape recorded. The analysis and interpretation of data been done using Atlas.ti, a software for qualitative data analysis, which is appropriate for text-based information as it assists in classifying, sorting, and arranging the interview data. The session ended when a saturation point was reached.

4. Results and Discussion

This study set out to create a discourse with the residents that reside within Geting beach to help better understand on their perception towards the impacts of KIKF. It ascertains the benefits and costs of the event in shaping residents' reactions and perceptions towards the organization of KIKF since 37 years ago. The interview sessions help the researchers to understand social and economic impacts as perceived by the residents.

4.1. Perceived Social Benefits and Costs of KIKF

Based on what has been discussed in the literature, the researchers consider social benefits as difficult to measure as they are very subjective. Therefore, during the interviews, a series of questions were asked in order to gain a better understanding of whether KIKF impacted their social life. The answers to these questions varied, but overall, the residents agreed that KIKF provides them meaningful recreational opportunities. Many of the respondents admitted that KIKF becomes a platform for them to spend quality time with family and friends.

“Other than spending quality time together, attending KIKF also provide chances to educate younger generations about local traditional and arts”

One of the respondents also expressed that;

“ I strongly believe youngster should be exposed to local traditional art and heritage, including traditional games like Kite (Wau), Gasing (top spinning), bird singing activities, and playing the drum like Rebana Ubi and Kertuk. This exposure is important in tradition preservation initiatives”.

One of the respondents expressed the excitement of having KIKF. He said:

“KIKF is an awaiting fiesta for the villagers every year. For one week long, its become a phenomenon for this area. It is fun and full of activities. It shows various types of kite exhibitions such as giant Wau Bulan, Wau Kucing, and Wau Merak; dikir barat performances, kite decorations contest, selling foods and so on. Parents would bring their kids to show many types of kites. People from far would come and stay along the beachside day and night just to feel the excitement and enjoyment of the KIKF”.

Significantly, tradition has served as the fundamental of the community's identity and the basis of patriotism (Kvam, 2011). Thus, hosting of KIKF are said to have increased local pride among local residents, especially as KIKF is able to introduce Geting beach to the outsiders. This festival also has formed the image and identity of Kelantan as the only state that possesses a stronghold of traditional Malay culture. Moreover, the culture performed by Malay people in Kelantan cannot be found elsewhere Pawanteh and Kuake (2016) as it is relatively different from culture performed by the same ethnic group in other states in Malaysia. This really portrays the image of Kelantan as the cradle of Malay culture because most of the traditional Malay cultures can be found there (Mohd, 2011). Overall, the subjects of the study were found to express positive perceptions about KIKF even when they are aware of the negative impacts of the event. A respondent who worked in dealing traffic congestion and overcrowded during KIKF

did not express his opposition towards the event organization indicating their high level of tolerance towards the event.

“For one week long, many people came to this area. It is overcrowded. Suddenly our area got traffic jammed, like Kuala Lumpur!!! We don’t mind, we find difficulties to go somewhere, sometimes it disturbed our routine. But, never mind, it rarely happens. We love it. It kind of celebration and fiesta for us!”

This in line with [Ma et al. \(2013\)](#) explanation that residents would tolerate the negative impact of tourism (such as traffic congestion and environmental impact) when they expect a greater benefit (such as local job opportunities) from the development. Due to greater benefit, residents would prepare themselves to cope with the disadvantages brought by tourism development [Jepson et al. \(2013\)](#).

4.2. Perceived Economic Benefits and Cost of KIKF

Unlike what was found by [Dwyer and Forsyth \(2009\)](#) who confirmed the economic benefits of events as a primary reason for a resident to support the event in their study, a different finding was found in Kelantan. Data from the interview sessions indicate that residents did not perceive the economic impact of the KIKF to be as great as what was found in other studies. In the context of KIKF, this study found that residents did not support the event because of its economic benefits. In fact, residents indicated that most economic benefits did not flow to them as outsiders monopolized most of the business tenders for businesses during the events. Albeit being aware of this fact, respondents still indicated positive reactions toward the event.

“We love seeing KIKF in our place. Even though we aware that we never get any huge profit of this. Those seller that sell foods, drinks and souvenir are not from us. Moreover, the operator of the resort and big restaurant do not belong to the local. However, during KIKF, we cannot deny that some of us that involved in tourism related activities like taxi driver, food stall owner, earn extra income”

“Frankly speaking, we never expect that KIKF would contribute to our family’s income. All this while, without depending on KIKF, we managed to survive, we have our steady source of income”.

Immediate or direct leakages are the most common economic cost discussed in the literature ([Davies et al., 2013](#)). It happens when monies spent within the event site may not actually give impact to the locality. For example, when an event organizer allows outside retailer to run their business during the event, and after the event ends, the retailers take the money back with them. The interviews with the respondent clarify this whereby they admitted that the hawkers are from outside the community. Importantly, they also noticed on the existing of international kite exhibitors during the festival. Definitely, they considered this as the causes for money flow outside Malaysia and deliberated this as a negative impact.

4.3. Positive Spirit of KIKF as the Key to Continuous Support

The residents were asked to express their feeling about KIKF. While everyone gave a dissimilar statement, several themes emerged from the majority of the responses. Playing kite is synonym with Kelantanese and perfectly well blended with their life. It is part of their ancestors’ leisure activities. Having KIKF for one week long give them positive feelings as they know that kite, or in a local language known as Wau are originated from Kelantan and belong to them. To them, the traditional art and heritage are not merely objects of beauty but serve as means of creating an environment of peace and tranquility ([Shuaib, 2013](#)).

Kelantanese is famous for their strong sense of loyalty and provincialism ([Pawanteh and Kuake, 2016](#)). Its proven when they are still practices ([Shuaib, 2013](#)) many traditional Malay cultures such as shadow play, love magic, and kite flying that have largely died out on the other states in Malaysia ([Pawanteh and Kuake, 2016](#)). Other than, strengthen their inner spirit, having KIKF provide recreational opportunities and give them chances to bring their kids to the festivals. All of the residents believe that having KIKF would help to preserve their cultural traditions.

At the end of each interview, Respondents were asked: “How do you show your support towards this event?” [Nunkoo \(2016\)](#) also said that the resident’s active support is a pre-requisite to sustain the tourism product. The responses indicate that residents have a positive spirit about KIKF. For example, a respondent remarked when asked about how he showed his support towards KIKF, *“We show our support by attending the festival; we have something else to do for one week long”*. Other respondents described the way they support KIKF by saying *“KIKF is an awaiting festival. We definitely have no objections towards the organizations of KIKF. We never complain about the traffic jammed and crowded!”* In short, many members of the community are very optimistic towards the organization of KIKF.

5. Conclusion

Resident’s perception towards Kelantan International Kite Festival in social and economic are varied. These include upgrade their social life, provides meaningful recreational activities, a platform for quality time with family members and friends, tools for local cultural, art and heritage education, a platform that strengthens community’s identity, increased local pride as well as uphold the image of Kelantan as a state that strongly practices traditional Malay culture. Despite all these beneficial impacts, the resident had regarded KIKF as causing traffic congestion and overcrowded. Nevertheless, these two negative impacts did not affect their perception and support towards the event, as definitely they can see that the positive impacts of KIKF are greater than its cost. It showed a high level of tolerance for tourism-caused inconveniences.

The interview also provides a contradictory finding whereby the majority of the scholars in the literature (i.e. Dwyer and Forsyth (2009); Homsud and Promsaard (2015) mentioned that resident would support tourism product development including event when they had greater economic impacts from the development. Unpredictably, this study denied the fact when it is proven that residents in Geting beach still supported the event even though they aware that they never have chances to obtain economic benefits from the festival. It clearly showed when they admitted that most of the businesses tender were monopolies by an outsider. The probing session also failed to twist their stand that they support KIKF, even though limited economic benefit were gained from the event. Nevertheless, deep in their heart, as the owner of the place, they are hoping for some kind consideration by the authority and organizer. They never request to have half of the coin, but having space for them to exhibit their local product is good enough for them. Even though KIKF managed to uphold the image of Kelantan as a cradle for Malay Culture, but if fails to highlight Getting beach's local products. Residents are hoping that their marine and a riverine product like salted fish, fish crackers and others local traditional food like *serunding*, *keropok lekor*, *budub* being given a special place during the event.

The above discussion concludes that the interview session provides deeper insight into matters of understanding resident's perception towards KIKF. Regardless of its economic benefit, the resident would consistently support the organization of KIKF. The major reason is due to their positive perception towards the social impact of KIKF. Above-mentioned social benefits seem more valuable to the residents rather than economic impact. Positive spirit of KIKF seems as key for continuous support towards KIKF since 37 years ago until today.

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