Importance of Preserving the Non-Use Value of the Cultural Heritage: Case Study of George Town, Penang World Heritage Site

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Abstract. This paper aims to focus on the attitude and responses of the stakeholders on the importance of preserving the non-use value of cultural heritage for George Town, Penang World Heritage Site (GPWHS) conservation. This research has examined the possibilities of several attitudes of the stakeholders in explaining the importance of preserving the non-use value for the GPWHS conservation. Pearson’s Correlation and Multiple Linear Regressions were used in predicting the dependent variable using a set of several independent variables. The purpose of the correlation test was to prove whether the correlation between the dimensions of the independent variables has had any influence on the non-use value of cultural heritage for the GPWHS conservation. A face-to-face interviewing technique using the structured CV questionnaire aided by photo images-supported was applied in this survey. The numbers of completed questionnaires were 294 from local residents and 147 from tourists (domestic and foreign) in GTWHS. This paper reveals that there was a relationship between the local stakeholders’ attitude and responses on the importance of preserving the non-use value and the WTP value for the GTWHS conservation.

Introduction

In the Malaysian context, the present rate of development, economic growth, rising educational standard and the consequential increase of leisure time have influenced the demand to conserve a cultural heritage. Malaysians are beginning to appreciate the value and significance of heritage and culture tourism as the visitors have increasingly arrived to the country to visit the heritage sites. Based on several studies, the non-use value was found to be an important component of values for many cultural heritage sites [1, 2, 3]. Non-use value is a passive use value of the cultural heritage that are not established in the market processes but only enjoyed by individuals who would be willing to share resources such as spend money to obtain or preserve them [4]. Although there has been an increasing acceptance of the wider economic value of cultural goods by scholars, policy makers and industry players worldwide, however, the importance of economic valuation in estimating the non-use value of the cultural heritage in Malaysia has not been comprehensive enough till now. It has not been widely implemented in the development and organization of the cultural tourism as well as the heritage sites conservation in Malaysia. Most of the economics valuation research studies have been focusing only on the ecological and environmental economics areas [5]. This significant value could assist policy makers recognize any incongruity relating to what the community truly has demanded as well as being willing to give for and the dilapidation to the resource due to more modern developments. The public preferences as measured by their willingness-to-pay (WTP) value for the cultural heritage conservation should be given due consideration in decision-making in order to promote the sustainability of the WHS. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a planning strategy in order to make use of the presented potential of the heritage place for their cultural heritage conservation. For example, the listing of George Town and Melaka as a WHS respectively has helped to develop the cultural tourism industry that has given