



**PLANNING MALAYSIA:**

*Journal of the Malaysian Institute of Planners*

**VOLUME 21 ISSUE 4 (2023), Page 190 – 203**

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN SOCIAL CULTURAL APPROACH IN SABAH**

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### **Abstract**

The generation of the national economy also lists the tourism industry as one of the sectors that need to be taken into consideration, primarily through social-cultural that has its characteristics to attract foreign tourists to visit the state of Sabah. This research study was conducted to investigate and evaluate the effectiveness of tourism development on social-cultural in Sabah. This research uses a quantitative approach, where questionnaires are the main instrument in collecting data in Sabah. The questionnaire format's structure is divided into two, namely, part A (focused on the demographic profile) and part B (concentrate on the cultural-social approach in tourism development in Sabah). The study sample was a total of 74 respondents, and the questionnaire was distributed randomly in the tourist focus area of Kota Kinabalu. The analysis used is descriptive and correlational. The findings of the study indicate that the majority of cultural variables and social variables are centred on a positive curve (or towards the right), where most respondents think that local government programs and activities help a lot in understanding the cultural-social importance of the tourism sector. In addition, the uniqueness and privilege of cultural-social tourism, such as through clothing, food, wedding events, dance, etc., can play a significant role in the development of tourism. In conclusion, cultural-social tourism should be the main theme not only for the generation of the national economy but also crucial in the preservation and conservation of the continuity of Sabah's local cultural-social tourism characteristics, which should be preserved in their originality forever rather than being outdated by the era of modernisation.

**Keywords:** Social-culture, Tourism sector, Economic generation, Authenticity, Era of modernisation

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Sabah has various tourist attractions, such as cultural, environmental or man-made structures. According to Danting et al. (2018), the rural tourism sector in Sabah may be further enhanced with a comprehensive development plan by the government. The importance of tourism has been widely recognized globally as an important factor in the development of rural areas (Aytug and Mikaeli, 2017). In general, tourism is one of the most important industries in most developed countries as well as in developing countries, because it is able to develop physical, economic, social, cultural, political, and technological dimensions (Hausman, 2001). Due to tourism activities, various types of opportunities are created such as job opportunities, infrastructure development and so on. Sabah is one of the states in Malaysia that contributes to national tourism development because of its excellent natural ecosystem including flora and fauna. Moreover, Latip et al. (2013) suggested the need for a sustainability approach in forest management as well as any other hot spot tourism. The islands in Sabah are the main attraction for tourists worldwide who like to enjoy the untouched ecosystem and mesmerise with beautiful scenery. The Sabah Tourism Board is an agency responsible for promoting the tourism industry in Sabah. The government allocated RM228 million from the state budget as stated in the State Government's Direction Policy, and RM15 million was allocated in the 2018 budget to empower rural tourism, as well as diversify the attractive destinations in the state (Sabah Tourism Board, 2019).

The government sees tourism as a tool for infrastructure development, employment opportunities, earning foreign exchange, balance of payments, regional development and generating benefits for local communities (Glasson et al., 1995). Tourism development can increase income and individual results for the host country (Ahn et al., 2002). Tourism plays an important role for economic development in this regard (Yusoh et al, 2022). This industry has a different contribution to the economy based on the perspective of each country. Tourism is a major source of foreign exchange earnings for most third world countries. In this regard, less developed countries (LDCs) consider tourism as an important tool for their economic development (Taleghani, 2010). The government of each country has provided support in the tourism sector to increase and recognize economic benefits. Tourism can contribute to the economic development of a country's macro and micro level. At the macro level, tourism is a catalyst for foreign exchange earnings, revenue generation, balance of payments and contributes to gross domestic production (GDP). Community involvement, people's well-being, job creation, income distribution, sustainable regional development are micro-level contributions of tourism.

Tourism is an important income generating industry in Malaysia. This sector was chosen as the second engine for the country's growth to develop global

competitiveness. This industry has a positive impact on the Malaysian economy to increase foreign exchange earnings, and employment opportunities (Bhuiyan et al., 2011). Malaysia has been ranked third in tourist arrivals among Commonwealth countries after Britain and Canada. According to 2005 statistics, tourism accounts for over 40% of Malaysia's balance of payments and is the main contributor to the country's foreign exchange (Malaysia, 2006). In 2006, tourism accounted for the second largest foreign exchange earning sector after manufacturing. Tourism earned US\$18.1 billion in export revenue which represented 10% of Malaysia's total exports in 2006 (WTTC, 2006). The Malaysian government has placed emphasis on the development of the tourism industry in the mid-1980s following the global economic recession and the decline in petroleum assets. The Government has established the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism in this connection. In 2004, this ministry was named the 'Ministry of Tourism' (Fateh et al., 2009). The government has allocated sufficient funds to provide basic infrastructure in the tourism industry. Malaysia captured 2% of the global market share of inbound tourism in 2008. The industry employs 1.7 million workers or about 16% of total employment in 2008 (Malaysia, 2011). The Malaysian government has played an important role in creating a legal and institutional framework to ensure sustainable tourism. Therefore, this article presents a research study conducted focusing on the effectiveness of tourism development in a cultural-social approach in Sabah, Malaysia.

## **INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS**

This research study focused on a quantitative approach, where questionnaires were used to collect raw data in the area of Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. In other words, this questionnaire will only be disseminated to local residents who will be respondents to this research study by living in tourist focus areas and able to carry out tourism activities. The sample size of this research study will involve local residents who live near coastal areas, mountainous areas, and forest edge areas, where the information provided is more accurate, true and accurate. This situation will also reduce the error gap between the information obtained from the respondents. The total sample size is recommended to be 100 respondents only, but not limited to that number and the rate of adding respondents will help improve the accuracy of the information obtained through the analysis in this study. The sampling method used in this study is random, where the collection of this data is not conditional on gender, age, or other factors that can limit the data collected. As for the questionnaire format, it is divided into part A and part B, where part A focuses on profile demographics only and part B will focus on the variables of the effectiveness of tourism development in a cultural-social approach. The scale used is the Guttman Scale in Part A and the Likert Scale in

Part B. 5-points are used in the Likert Scale, namely 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, and 5-Strongly Agree. This research study uses the method of descriptive analysis and correlation analysis with a total of 74 respondents who were successfully collected.

### Research Study Area

Sabah is a state that has the potential to be developed as a world tourism center with the theme of island tourism (such as Mabul Island), highland tourism (such as Mount Kinabalu), cultural tourism (such as ethnic Kadazan-Dusun), nature tourism (such as hot springs poring) and flora and fauna tourism (such as Hutan Lipur Sepilok). The speciality of the state of Sabah with an area of 73904 km<sup>2</sup> has led to economic growth in the state and has become an attraction for the migration factor to occur, as the latest population (with data obtained in 2020) is 3418785 people (City Population, 2022). Suppose you look at the coordinates of longitude 5°15'N and latitude 117°0'E (Figure 1), Sabah. In that case, it cannot be denied that the state has an equatorial or tropical climate with an estimated temperature of 32°C (90°F) for the land area and an average temperature of 21°C (70°F) for the highlands. In other words, Sabah is a 'hot and sunny' state all year round. In addition, rainfall occurs frequently from October to February with the Northeast Monsoon season throughout the year, as well as hot or dry months in May and September.



Figure 1: The study area in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, descriptive analysis based on frequency and percentage is used in part A (ie demographic profile) and part B (ie variable cultural impact and social impact). In other words, the exact number that was successfully collected was as many as 74 respondents and can be shown in the form of Table 1. The findings of the study show the gender variable where the number of women (N=55) exceeds the number of men (N=19) by 48.6%. The significant difference that occurs is due to the majority of male going out to work to find income to support their families. And not to forget, most of the female whose number is high due to the respondents do not work or become housewives completely and are only at home all the time. Not only the gender variable, the length of stay in Sabah is also one of the necessary and important variables in the determination of authentic, accurate and precise information in this research study. In other words, Table 1 proves that 81.1% of respondents have stayed for more than 9 years with a total frequency (N) of 60 people, followed by 12.2% of respondents who have stayed for less than 1 year with only 9 people, and lastly 1 to 3 years and 4 to 6 years for 4% (N=3) and 2.7% (N=2). If you look at the trend, the results of this study can document information related to the development of tourism that can have a positive or negative impact on culture and society in Sabah. In summary, the longer the respondent lives in Sabah, the more accurate and precise the information obtained for variables related to social impact and cultural impact. This will be discussed in the next section.

**Table 1:** Part A: Social and Demographic Profile.

Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	19	25.7
Female	55	74.3
Length stays in Sabah (years)		
<1	9	12.2
1 to 3	3	4
4 to 6	2	2.7
7 to 9	-	-
>9	60	81.1

Furthermore, in part B, the social impact variable shows the variable of tourism development on the social and cultural impact by the perception of local residents in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah (Table 2) showing that the majority of the variables are curved to the right or positive. In other words, most respondents have views and opinions that are 'neutral' to 'strongly agree'. Referring to the

findings of the study in Table 2, in summary the majority of variables that are holistic towards strongly agree are (Figure 2):

- 1) I have relatives who live together in this area;
- 2) Local residents actively interact while carrying out the duties of the tourism event;
- 3) I agree that tourism improves leisure and entertainment facilities that improve my life; and
- 4) Other organisations support my community through tourism knowledge programs.

While the other variables are more 'disagree-neutral-agree'. In other words, most respondents think that only tourism activities have the ability to generate daily economic income. Because of this, the local population, especially those who live close to the coast, mountains, flora-fauna; will tend to be active in the tasks of events related to tourism. Not only that, the local residents also hope that the state government can help in improving leisure and entertainment facilities so that the respondents not only help from the perspective of the national economy, but also have the opportunity to maintain social relations between local residents together in maintaining and protecting the natural uniqueness of tourism in morning Coupled with relatives who live nearby in groups, respondents are very positive that the tourism knowledge program by related organisations can be carried out comprehensively and this situation is very helpful to the local population for the purpose of reducing the negative impact in the social impact of tourism development, can even increase the positive impact social together with efforts to develop tourism through appropriate activities.

Meanwhile, the cultural variables (Figure 3) involved can be proven through positive tendencies through Table 2 as follows:

- 1) Income through traditional activities (eg fishing and farming) maintained by local residents;
- 2) Tourism events help promote the culture and image of my community.
- 3) I am confident that my skills and experience can help in finding a good job;
- 4) I gradually increase my understanding of culture;
- 5) I have the opportunity to improve my job skills;
- 6) I have experienced local government training programs to improve my skills and knowledge.
- 7) I understand the advantages and benefits of tourism; and
- 8) I am aware of the cost of tourism.

Referring to the knowledge of local people, most respondents are inclined to practise traditional culture in search of daily income, for example fishing and farming. However, there are a number of respondents who think that if they are exposed to local government training programs, this situation will surely improve the respondents' skills and knowledge of tourism and also have the opportunity to help them find better jobs, as for example through the development of tourism activities. One of the examples that can be directly seen is through tourism events that promote the culture and image of the local community. This situation has encouraged Sabah's cultural tourism to take place, and the factor contributing to this is through the local government's training program. Although local people are aware of the cost of tourism, but for the longer term, the respondents are very positive that the advantages and benefits of tourism obtained are multiples of the cost of production in the first time. Because of this, respondents believe that socio-cultural tourism does not bring negative stimulation in the minority, but brings the majority of benefits and advantages to the local population and the country through efficient tourism development in long-term planning.

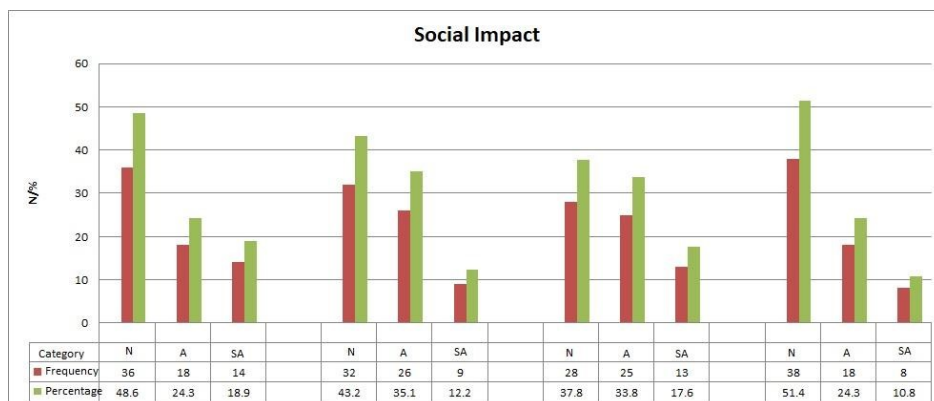
**Table 2:** Descriptive analysis based on tourism development on cultural and social impact in Sabah.

Category	SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
<b>Social Impact</b>					
I have relatives who live together in this area.	1 (1.4)	5 (6.8)	36 (48.6)	18 (24.3)	14 (18.9)
Local residents interact actively while carrying out the tasks of the tourism event.	2 (2.7)	5 (6.8)	32 (43.2)	26 (35.1)	9 (12.2)
I participate and exchange ideas in community meetings and events.	1 (1.4)	13 (17.6)	35 (47.3)	16 (21.6)	9 (12.2)
I agree that tourism enhances the leisure and entertainment facilities that enhance my life.	2 (2.7)	6 (8.1)	28 (37.8)	25 (33.8)	13 (17.6)
My community has ample meeting space for community gatherings.	1 (1.4)	11 (14.9)	36 (48.6)	19 (25.7)	7 (9.5)
I recognize those tourist faces in my daily life.	1 (1.4)	8 (10.8)	42 (56.8)	16 (21.6)	7 (9.5)
My community usually runs tourism activities and events.	2 (2.7)	12 (16.2)	28 (37.8)	24 (32.4)	8 (10.8)
The State Government financially supports my community organisation.	2 (2.7)	9 (12.2)	37 (50.0)	19 (25.7)	7 (9.5)

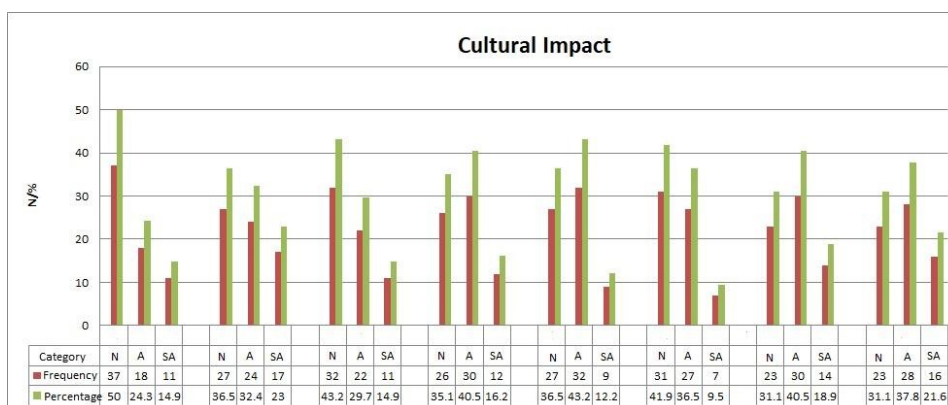
<b>Category</b>	<b>SD (%)</b>	<b>D (%)</b>	<b>N (%)</b>	<b>A (%)</b>	<b>SA (%)</b>
Other organisations support my community through tourism knowledge programs.	3 (4.1)	7 (9.5)	38 (51.4)	18 (24.3)	8 (10.8)
<b>Cultural Impact</b>					
I still practise extreme traditional life.	1 (1.4)	10 (13.5)	39 (52.7)	15 (20.3)	9 (12.2)
Ceremonial activities are enhanced in my community.	1 (1.4)	8 (10.8)	38 (51.4)	21 (28.4)	6 (8.1)
Income through traditional activities (eg fishing and farming) is maintained by local residents.	2 (2.7)	6 (8.1)	37 (50.0)	18 (24.3)	11 (14.9)
Tourism events help promote the culture and image of my community.	2 (2.7)	4 (5.4)	27 (36.5)	24 (32.4)	17 (23.0)
I am confident that my skills and experience can help in finding a good job.	2 (2.7)	7 (9.5)	32 (43.2)	22 (29.7)	11 (14.9)
I gradually improved my understanding of the culture.	3 (4.1)	3 (4.1)	26 (35.1)	30 (40.5)	12 (16.2)
I have the opportunity to improve my job skills.	2 (2.7)	4 (5.4)	27 (36.5)	32 (43.2)	9 (12.2)
I have experienced local government training programs to improve my skills and knowledge.	3 (4.1)	6 (8.1)	31 (41.9)	27 (36.5)	7 (9.5)
I understand the advantages and benefits of tourism.	2 (2.7)	5 (6.8)	23 (31.1)	30 (40.5)	14 (18.9)
I am aware of the cost of tourism.	3 (4.1)	4 (5.4)	23 (31.1)	28 (37.8)	16 (21.6)
I have participated in the coastal environmental impact program.	3 (4.1)	8 (10.8)	32 (43.2)	23 (31.1)	8 (10.8)
I have attended a local government program on tourism knowledge.	4 (5.4)	9 (12.2)	35 (47.3)	19 (25.7)	7 (9.5)

*Notes: SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; N=Normal; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree.*





**Figure 2:** Descriptive analysis based on tourism development on social impact in Sabah.  
 (Notes: N=Normal; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree)



**Figure 3:** A descriptive analysis based on tourism development on the cultural impact in Sabah.  
 (Notes: N=Normal; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree)

The next analysis is important for the determination of tourism activities that can have a direct and indirect impact on these social cultures. Previous analysis techniques show that tourism development that has an impact on culture and impact on society is individual and cannot show the relationship between the two variables. In order to obtain continuity between these cultural-social variables, it can only be done through correlation analysis (Table 3). Overall, the research findings prove that cultural variables have an impact-and-reflection on social variables by tourism development in Sabah. On a positive note, it can be said that respondents think that practising an extreme traditional life can be linked to most relatives living together in the area. It is very important for relatives to be able to live together because if there is a problem, they can help each other. When this happens, the respondent will feel

very comfortable and the probability of accepting the change is lower. Because of this, the respondents continue to practise extreme traditional attitudes and lives, where it is related to fishing and farming in the hinterland, the city, or on the coast.

The local people who live a traditional life are not only a source of daily food for the family, but the catch and agricultural products will be sold to the local residents. Small-scale business activities will occur in economic generations in a family. Indirectly, relationships between relatives or with residents can also be maintained, as well as getting the attention of the state and federal governments in an effort to improve the national economy through the tourism sector. For this reason, the state government takes this initiative and opportunity by providing financial support to local community organisations. In other words, the local government will provide and run a training program on tourism knowledge to the residents, and this situation is also agreed by most respondents who actively participate in the activity where they admit that the tourism training program greatly increases the knowledge of the local population regarding tourism development. This situation greatly increases the local population's economy many times over, apart from being completely dependent on small business activities.

It is not just the state government in efforts to improve the tourism sector through various programs, other organisations including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are also involved in efforts to improve tourism development. For example, the Government encourages the involvement of NGOs (Utusan Borneo Online, 2016), NGOs are encouraged to organise more sports activities (Utusan Borneo Online, 2019), and NGOs play an important role in helping develop rural communities (Nabalu News, 2022); in an effort to increase and develop the tourism sector in Sabah. Because of this, the local residents interact actively when carrying out the tasks of the tourism event. This is because with the promotion of tourism programs that are held every time, respondents will definitely get information and knowledge regarding the probability of the existence of opportunities to generate daily income through this tourism sector. Respondents also strongly agree that tourism events help promote the culture and image of the local community, in addition to positively thinking that tourism improves leisure and entertainment facilities in the local area. For example, customary activities such as wedding ceremonies, ceremonies to celebrate the birth of a baby, ceremonies to celebrate the new year, and death ceremonies that attract foreign tourists from abroad to witness the uniqueness and traditional authenticity of Sabah's social culture. And also, traditional equipment can be a privilege in developing the tourism sector. Therefore, regardless of directly or indirectly, the socio-cultural characteristics are very unique and dynamic, as well as special because this matter not only contributes to the generation of the national economy, but the development of tourism helps a lot in terms of conservation and preservation of the local social-culture in Sabah.

**Table 3:** Correlation analysis between cultural impact variables and social impact variables by tourism development in Sabah.

Social Impact versus Cultural Impact		I have relatives who live together in this area.	Local residents interact actively while carrying out the tasks of the tourism event.	I participate and exchange ideas in community meetings and events.	I agree that tourism enhances the leisure and entertainment facilities that enhance my life.	My community has ample meeting space for community gatherings.	I recognize those tourist faces in my daily life.	My community usually runs tourism activities and events.	The State Government financially supports my community organization.	Other organizations support my community through tourism knowledge programs.
I still practice extreme traditional life.	P.C. S. N.	.279* .016 74	.461* .000 74	.579** .000 74	.384** .001 74	.386** .001 74	.408** .000 74	.350** .002 74	.533** .000 74	.574** .000 74
Ceremonial activities are enhanced in my community.	P.C. S. N.	.482** .000 74	.410** .000 74	.426** .000 74	.399** .000 74	.335** .004 74	.414** .000 74	.455** .000 74	.496** .000 74	.544** .000 74
Income through traditional activities (eg fishing and farming) is maintained by the local population.	P.C. S. N.	.320** .005 74	.357** .002 74	.317** .006 74	.369** .001 74	.298** .010 74	.438** .000 74	.337** .003 74	.374** .001 74	.465** .000 74
Tourism events help promote the culture and image of my community.	P.C. S. N.	.372** .001 74	.411** .000 74	.256** .028 74	.438** .000 74	.309** .007 74	.394** .001 74	.329** .004 74	.382** .001 74	.463** .000 74
I am confident that my skills and experience can help in finding a good job.	P.C. S. N.	.336** .003 74	.279** .016 74	.376** .001 74	.353** .002 74	.246* .034 74	.381** .001 74	.198 .091 74	.370** .001 74	.505** .000 74
I gradually improved my understanding of the culture.	P.C. S. N.	.317** .006 74	.334** .004 74	.284* .014 74	.434** .000 74	.276* .017 74	.188 .109 74	.156 .186 74	.368** .001 74	.346** .003 74

Social Impact versus Cultural Impact		I have relatives who live together in this area.	Local residents interact actively while carrying out the tasks of the tourism event.	I participate and exchange ideas in community meetings and events.	I agree that tourism enhances the leisure and entertainment facilities that enhance my life.	My community has ample meeting space for community gatherings.	I recognize those tourist faces in my daily life.	My community usually runs tourism activities and events.	The State Government financially supports my community organization.	Other organizations support my community through tourism knowledge programs.
I have the opportunity to improve my job skills.	P.C. S. N.	.369** .001 74	.369** .001 74	.220 .059 74	.432** .000 74	.437** .000 74	.406** .000 74	.232* .046 74	.343** .003 74	.405** .000 74
I have experienced local government training programs to improve my skills and knowledge.	P.C. S. N.	.302** .009 74	.305** .008 74	.454** .000 74	.307** .008 74	.358** .002 74	.486** .000 74	.333** .004 74	.369** .001 74	.446** .000 74
I understand the advantages and benefits of tourism.	P.C. S. N.	.375** .001 74	.366** .001 74	.129 .274 74	.398** .000 74	.387** .001 74	.340** .003 74	.195 .097 74	.284* .014 74	.341** .003 74
I am aware of the cost of tourism.	P.C. S. N.	.347** .002 74	.370** .001 74	.205 .079 74	.496** .000 74	.393* .001 74	.449** .000 74	.250* .032 74	.386** .001 74	.480** .000 74
I have participated in the coastal environmental impact program.	P.C. S. N.	.370** .001 74	.307** .008 74	.346** .003 74	.358** .002 74	.444** .000 74	.332** .004 74	.221 .058 74	.372** .001 74	.477** .000 74
I have attended a local government program on tourism knowledge.	P.C. S. N.	.253* .029 74	.307** .008 74	.391** .001 74	.353** .002 74	.493** .000 74	.266* .022 74	.231* .047 74	.358** .002 74	.387** .001 74

Notes: P.C. = Pearson Correlation; S=Significant (2-tailed); N=Frequency.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, tourism development has a lot of positive impact on the local social culture in the state of Sabah. The locals who live in this tourist destination area are very open-minded and believe that tourism activities should not only be themed to the environment or based on coastal scenery, but also important in promoting the special cultural and social characteristics through clothing, food, wedding events, dance, etc. Therefore, cultural-and-social tourism should be listed as one of the main themes not only for the generation of the national economy, but also important in preserving and conserving Sabah's local cultural-and-social uniqueness so that it can be maintained forever rather than being swallowed up by time.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to thank to the Research Management Center (PPP), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) for providing and financial support to complete this research study as well as publishing the academic paper.

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Received: 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023. Accepted: 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023