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CONTENTS

COMMITTEE MEMBERS	2
Tentative Program	3
1 BRAND EXPERIENCE AND BRAND TRUST: AN IMPACT TOWARDS CUSTOMER BRAND LOYALTY IN THEME PARK SERVICE INDUSTRY	5
2 ACCEPTANCE OF NON-MUSLIMS TOWARDS MUSLIMS FRIENDLY TRAVEL	6
3 THE EFFECT OF HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES TOWARDS BUSINESS PERFORMANCE IN TRANSPORTATION COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA.....	7
4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAVEL BLOGS ON CONSUMERS' TRAVEL PLANNING	8
5 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE TOURIST VISIT INTENTION TO MUSEUMS IN MALACCA..	9
6 EXPLORING GOPENG, PERAKAS ADVENTURE TOURISM DESTINATION FROM TOURIST PERSPECTIVES	10
7 GASTRONOMIC TOURISM BRANDING INFLUENCING TOURIST REVISIT ATTENTION: A CASE STUDY OF PENANG	11
8 LOCAL COMMUNITY AWARENESS TOWARDS WATER BASED ACTIVITY IN PANCHOR	12
9 AN EMPIRICAL EXAMINATION OF FACTOR INFLUENCING YOUTH TRAVELLERS' INTENTION IN SELECTING MUSLIM-FRIENDLY TOURISM	13
10 TO UNDERSTAND TOURISTS PROFILE AND PREFERENCES IN CULTURAL AND HERITAGE TOURISM: A CASE STUDY GEORGETOWN, PENANG	14
11 LOCAL COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SUPPORT FOR FUTURE ECO-TOURISM DEVELOPMENT.....	15
12 A CONCEPTUAL PAPER: THE STUDY OF COMPETENCIES OF TOURISM STUDENTS TOWARDS THEIR WORK EXPERIENCE	16
13 DETERMINING THE MAIN INFLUENCE FACTORS FOR THE TOURISTS' REVISIT INTENTION IN MELAKA.....	17
14 DETERMINING OF TOURIST'S SPATIAL BEHAVIOUR AND TOURIST MOVEMENT PATTERN IN MUAR ROYAL TOWN, JOHOR	18
15 EXPLORING THE FACTORS INFLUENCE HALAL FOOD SELECTION AMONG MUSLIM YOUTH WHILE TRAVELING	19
16 LOCAL COMMUNITY READINESS AND WILLINGNESS TO CONSERVATION OF PEAT SWAMP FOREST IN AIR HITAM MUAR	20
17 ASSESSING MEDICAL TOUR SERVICE TOWARDS TOURIST BEHAVIORAL INTENTION IN PENANG	21
18 LOCAL STUDENT PERCEPTION TOWARDS FOREIGN STUDENT IN IIUM GOMBAK	22
19 THE IMPACT OF FACILITIES EFFICIENCY ON TOURIST DESTINATION SATISFACTION: A CASE STUDY IN KUALA LUMPUR.....	23

<u>20</u> TOURISTS' PERCEIVED VALUE AND SATISFACTION IN A COMMUNITY-BASED HOMESTAY IN KAMPUNG PARIT BUGIS, MUAR, JOHOR	24
<u>21</u> THE PUSH FACTOR AND ITS EFFECT ON TOURIST INTENTION TO REVISIT THE HOMESTAY PARIT BUGIS, MUAR.....	25
<u>22</u> LOCAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT TOWARDS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN MERSING, JOHOR	26
<u>23</u> EXPLORING EXPECTATIONS AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIMS IN PERFORMING UMRAH.....	27
<u>24</u> A STUDY ON DETERMINATION OF SPORTS TOURISM PREFERENCES IN MALAYSIA.....	28
<u>25</u> OVER-TOURISM IMPACT ON LOCAL PERSPECTIVE AT MELAKA HERITAGE SITE.....	29
<u>26</u> VISITORS' DINING EXPERIENCE AND THEIR BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION TOWARDS RESTAURANTS IN BANDAR DIRAJA MUAR, JOHOR.....	30
<u>27</u> MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE OF NON-MUSLIM TOURISTS TOWARDS MOSQUE TOURISM.....	31
<u>28</u> THE IMPACT OF TRAVEL BLOG AND VLOG ON TRAVEL DECISION MAKING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS	32
<u>29</u> YOUTH ATTITUDE OF RISK AND SAFETY IN SHAPING THE EXPERIENCES OF ADVENTURE TOURISM IN GUNUNG LEDANG: A CONCEPTUAL PAPER.....	33
<u>30</u> CONTENT ANALYSIS OF BOOKING.COM REVIEWS ON HOTEL IN PENANG	34
<u>31</u> THE IMPACT OF MONETARY, ACCESSIBILITY, SECURITY TOWARDS RELIGIOUS TOURISM INTENTION AMONG MUSLIMS YOUTH.....	35
<u>32</u> TOURISM STUDENTS' OPINIONS ON COMPETENCIES AND EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE	36
<u>33</u> THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOWARDS UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA TO TRAVEL: WEB 2.0	37
<u>34</u> THE ACCEPTANCE OF GAMIFIED SMART TOURISM APPLICATION: MOBILE AUGMENTED REALITY IN MALAYSIA'S TOURISM.....	38
<i>Social Thanks to all hands:.....</i>	39



LOCAL COMMUNITY READINESS AND WILLINGNESS TO CONSERVATION OF PEAT SWAMP FOREST IN AIR HITAM MUAR

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ABSTRACT

Peat swamp forest (PSF) has high potential in delivering wide range of economic and social benefits through developing ecotourism to conservation. However it is rarely to be optimised due to poor performance and involvement of locals as they are been viewed to simply gain benefits from tourism development rather than having cooperation in the process of achieving such development. Less awareness due to lack of knowledge and skills by the locals were also contributed to unwell management of natural resources. Therefore, this paper aimed to investigate the readiness and willingness of local community to participate in conserving PSF in Ayer Hitam Johor. In such, it is vital for natural resources to be well managed purposely to maximise the benefits, minimise the cost and reduce negative impacts resulted from conservation as well as achieving successful Community based conservation (CBC) in Ayer Hitam Muar. This study is quantitative nature. It was carried out by conducting survey around 30 respondents who living in adjacent to Ayer Hitam PSF. The data was analysed by using IBM statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 21 through several analysis such as descriptive analysis, descriptive analysis and reliability analysis. The outcomes of the research shows that majority of local community were received both direct and indirect benefits which influence the local community to participate in protect the peat swamp forest. In addition to this, the result shows that most of the locals acknowledged on the issues and current situation of the peat swamp forest, however few of them were not physically ready and willing to contribute in conservation due to age factor. The major contribution that can be seen is the local participation can lead toward developing tourism attraction on peat swamp forest in sustainability way through establishing Community based Conservation which able to protect the environment.

Keywords: Local community participation, Peat swamp Forest, local benefits, sustainability development