

2006.04.04

Residents have mixed opinions towards Hong Kong Disneyland

In the latest survey of resident's opinions towards Hong Kong Disneyland conducted in mid-March by the School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), it was found that residents' opinions towards the Disney theme park were mixed.

This longitudinal study has been undertaken by Dr John Ap, Associate Professor of SHTM, since 2000. Telephone surveys, using a random sample of residents, were being conducted to monitor general perceptions and opinions towards Hong Kong Disneyland and its impacts.

In the latest survey, some new and additional questions were included to address topics and recent issues such as current image, media influence, social responsibility and accountability, communications with the public, park visit experience (where applicable), and Ocean Park.

A random sample 524 residents were surveyed from March 13 to 16, 2006 by PolyU's Computer Aided Survey Team (CAST) housed in the Department of Applied Social Sciences. The results presented have a margin of error of plus or minus 4 per cent.

The key findings of the survey were summarized as follows :

- Continued and strong "support for the development of Hong Kong Disneyland" was shown by residents with 86 per cent in agreement while only five per cent opposed. The level of support shown is the highest recorded with previous survey results ranging from 76 per cent to 85 per cent support.
- Sixty-three per cent of the residents indicated that "the benefits of Hong Kong Disneyland would outweigh the costs", representing a 13 per cent drop in agreement, compared to the last survey conducted in 2004 when 76 per cent of respondents agreed with this statement.
- Residents acknowledged the role and importance of tourism with 86 per cent indicating they "would warmly welcome the increased number of tourists that Hong Kong Disneyland brings to Hong Kong"
- With regard to residents' "overall opinions towards the changes (i.e. impacts) associated with HK Disneyland", 62 per cent indicated that they liked the changes with most support given to the economic impacts (e.g. employment; revenue generated for the local economy) and least liked impacts being environmental ones (e.g. habitat of the Chinese white dolphins; noise/ air pollution from the fireworks).
- In terms of "the fairness of the deal with the Government providing \$13.6 billion for land reclamation and infrastructure to attract the Walt Disney Co. to Hong Kong", just over one quarter (27 per cent) of residents agreed the deal was fair, while 56 per cent indicated that it was not fair. Compared to previous survey results, where agreement to this statement ranged from 30 per cent to 43 per cent, there has been a downward shift in opinions on this item while respondents who indicated the deal was not fair ranged from 34 to 45 per cent.
- Residents' opinions towards the current image of HK Disneyland were obtained and it was found that 70 per cent indicated that their "opinions toward HK Disneyland have become more negative due to the problems that have been experienced since its opening." On the other hand, almost one in five (18 per cent) indicated that they disagreed with this statement.
- When asked about "media coverage" on HK Disneyland, 61 per cent of residents indicated it was negative while 11 per cent reported it as positive. In terms of the "fairness of media

reporting", 46 per cent indicated that it was fair while 29 per cent were of the opinion it was unfair. With regard to the "media influence in shaping residents' opinions", 71 per cent indicated that it had little or no influence on them.

- In response to the statement that "HK Disneyland is a socially responsible company" 28 per cent of residents agreed with 47 per cent disagreeing. On the matter of accountability, 93 per cent agreed that "As a publicly funded project, the management of HK Disneyland should be accountable to the HK public."
- In addressing concerns for the management of the park, 95 per cent of survey respondents agreed that "HK Disneyland's communication with the public should be improved."
- Among the residents who participated in the survey, 31 per cent had visited the park and over half (56 per cent) indicated that they were satisfied with their visit, while one in five (22 per cent) were not satisfied.
- With the Ocean Park related questions, two thirds (67 per cent) of the residents agreed that "HK Disneyland would complement rather than compete with Ocean Park". On the question, whether "the fun experience offered at Ocean Park and Hong Kong Disneyland would be comparable" 80 per cent residents agreed.
- One third (32 per cent) of survey respondents agreed that "most people would like to visit Hong Kong Disneyland rather than Ocean Park," while more than half (54 per cent) disagreed. On the other hand, 79 per cent of respondents indicated "that the opening of Disneyland would not reduce their future visits to Ocean Park.'

The latest survey findings reveal that residents are still supportive of HK Disneyland and recognise its contribution to the Hong Kong economy and tourism industry. However, concerns do exist in the areas of the fairness of the deal to attract The Walt Disney Co. to Hong Kong, accountability, communications, and its environmental impact. The settling in problems experienced since the opening of the park has resulted in residents currently having a more negative opinion towards the park.

On the other hand, given time, it is expected that HK Disneyland will be able to satisfactorily address these concerns. The survey findings also confirm a "win-win" outcome for Hong Kong with recognition among residents that Ocean Park complements HK Disneyland and opinions toward Ocean Park does not appear to have been adversely affected by the presence of HK Disneyland. It also suggests that that Hong Kong is able to accommodate two international theme parks.

Dr Ap concludes: "Knowing how the community perceives the benefits and costs of a major tourism attraction such as HK Disneyland is essential to the development, viability and sustainability of this joint venture. With the survey information, the HKSAR Government and HK Disneyland management can further improve this theme park project to address community concerns and to minimise its negative impacts - both actual and perceived. Sustainable support could only be attained when the community, at large, considers the arrangements are mutually beneficial."

Dr Ap and his team will conduct another survey on the subject again at the end of this year.



Press Contacts

Dr. John Ap

Associate Professor, School of Hotel and Tourism Management

Tel: (852) 2766 6348

Email: hmjohnap@polyu.edu.hk