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PolyU survey indicates mainstream support for Disneyland

A majority of Hong Kong residents have showed support for the development of Hong Kong Disneyland and believed the benefits would outweigh the costs despite concern about potential competition posed by another Disney theme park in Shanghai, according to a recent survey of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Led by Dr John Ap, Associate Professor of the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, this annual survey is the third of an on-going research study started in 2000. It aims at monitoring general perceptions and attitudes of Hong Kong residents toward Hong Kong Disneyland and its impacts.

Commenting on the results, Dr Ap said: "Three years following the announcement made by the Walt Disney Company and the SAR Government to build a Disney theme park, there is still a good degree of general support for the project within the community.

"This year, new questions were added in the survey to broaden our research. Findings reveal that there has been concern about the unfairness and lack of transparency in the arrangements made between the Government and the Walt Disney Company. Respondents also worried about having another Disney theme park in Shanghai as it might divert Chinese mainland tourists from Hong Kong. Noticeable concern has been consistently recorded towards the environmental impacts of the project."

A total of 514 residents were successfully interviewed during 27 to 29 November and 2 to 4 December this year. A random sampling method was used and telephone interviews were conducted through the Computer Aided Survey Team (CAST) of PolyU's Department of Applied Social Sciences.

The key findings of the survey are as follows:

- Eighty-five per cent of the respondents indicated support for the development of Hong Kong Disneyland. Eight per cent opposed while seven per cent gave a neutral rating. The level of support represents a five per cent increase from previous surveys conducted in 2000 and 2001.
- Seventy-five per cent of the respondents indicated that the benefits of Hong Kong Disneyland would outweigh the costs, representing an eight per cent increase compared to results of the two previous surveys. Fourteen per cent disagreed and 11 per cent gave a neutral response.
- Respondents tended to question (43%) the fairness of the deal in providing the land formation and infrastructure works in order to attract Disneyland to Hong Kong. This represents a 10 per cent and five per cent increase on the 2001 and 2002 survey results, respectively. On the other hand, a similar number of respondents agreed that it was a fair deal (39%).
- Interviewees were generally positive about the economic impacts of the project and gave relatively high ratings. Seventy-five per cent of the respondents agreed that they liked the changes associated with the "revenue generated for the local economy" due to the development of Hong Kong Disneyland.
- The social and cultural impacts of the project were also rated positively, though the extent of impact was not considered as large as for economic impacts. Seventy-two per cent of the respondents indicated that they liked the "opportunity to learn about other people and cultures"

- Forty-three per cent of the respondents indicated that they liked the "influence of American culture on Hong Kong society" while 47 per cent gave a neutral response. The two results are similar to previous surveys. For those who disliked the American influence, percentage has dropped from 21 per cent and 25 per cent in the 2000 and 2001 surveys respectively to 10 per cent this year.
- Two-thirds (69%) of the respondents either somewhat liked or liked the overall impacts or changes associated with the development of Hong Kong Disneyland. Another 13 per cent indicated that they somewhat disliked or disliked the overall impacts and 18 per cent gave a neutral response. These results are similar to those in the previous surveys.

The findings related to new questions included in the 2002 survey are as follows:

- Fifty-nine per cent of the respondents worried about media reports on the possibility for the Walt Disney Company to develop another park in Shanghai; while 29 per cent disagreed that it was a worry. Likewise, a similar percentage (62%) indicated that it would be unfair to have another Disney park in Shanghai as it would divert mainland tourists from Hong Kong Disneyland. About one-third (32%) did not think so.
- Three-quarters (75%) of the respondents indicated that there was a lack of transparency in the Hong Kong Disneyland deal; while 14 per cent said there was transparency. Eleven per cent gave a neutral response.
- When asked whether the Walt Disney Company was socially responsible, nearly half of the respondents (48%) indicated that it was not, while just over one-third indicated that it was. Sixteen per cent gave a neutral response.
- When asked about sharing of losses arising from the project, about two-thirds of the respondents (65%) indicated that both the Walt Disney Company and the SAR Government should share losses equally. Twenty-nine per cent disagreed.

This annual survey will continue in the next five to six years in order to keep track of public opinion toward Hong Kong Disneyland. Dr Ap concluded: "Knowing how the community perceives the benefits and costs of tourism is essential to the development of a viable tourism industry. With this information, the authorities and the Walt Disney Company can properly develop tourism projects like Hong Kong Disneyland to address community concerns and to minimise negative impacts - both actual and perceived ones. Sustainable support could only be attained when the community at large considers the arrangements are fair and mutually beneficial."

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