

Natural or Reclaimed Coastal Areas? The Role of Environmental Awareness in Supporting Coastal Ecotourism within Fishing Communities

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ABSTRACT

Visiting fishing villages and natural coastal areas offer unique experience for city dwellers. Sadly, many beautiful coastal areas in fast developing cities are witnessed to turn into new concrete jungles or man-made attractions through land reclamation. Land reclamation is the process of creating a new artificial land from the sea (Rosman et al., 2020). The construction of reclaiming lands from sea are known to destroy natural landscapes, damage natural areas for fish spawning and marine nursery habitats, lower the level of oxygen in the water, and significantly reduce the numbers of fish and other marine resources in the affected area (Ding et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2021). Land reclamation also may deprive fishermen and fishing communities of access and ability to utilize coastal and marine resources, thus directly affecting fishermen's income (Fabinyi, 2020). To sustain their livelihood and reduce their dependency on the declining marine resources, fishermen ventured into coastal ecotourism, providing tours and turning their fishing house into tourists accommodation (Stacey et al., 2021). According to Pineda et al. (2023), tourists who participates in ecotourism usually prefer going to natural areas, with the intention to help conserve the area and bring benefits to local communities. However, little is relatively known about how much tourists support fishing communities conducting ecotourism and whether environmental awareness does influence their support. Hence, this study investigates environmental awareness (EA) as a mediator in influencing the perception of land reclamation negative impacts (LR) and support for coastal ecotourism within fishing communities (CE).

Keywords: Coastal Ecotourism, Environmental Awareness, Fishing Community, Land reclamation