# ASSESSMENT OF INVERTEBRATES AS ECOTOURISM PRODUCT FOR TABIN WILDLIFE RESERVE, SABAH

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# ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in Tabin Wildlife Reserve (TWR), Lahad Datu, Sabah with a general objective to urge effective ways to increase invertebrate's conservation effort through ecotourism activity. Specifically, three objectives were posited in this study, namely, to determine the response of tourist to the concept of including such invertebrates information in current ecotourism activities, to obtain an overview of the current levels of the inclusion of invertebrates information in certain types of ecotourism activities and to provide recommendations on how to address the lack of invertebrate information in ecotourism. Therefore, mixed methods approaches were applied which comprised Participation and Observation of TWR guided walk, Invertebrate's Record and Preliminary Entotourism Course and Survey. Alternately, a conceptual framework was proposed in this study which comprised five variables overall (Activity, Information, Willingness, Interest and Ecotourism). SPSS and AMOS analysis utilising Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) were used for quantitative data analysis, while Leximancer was used to analyse the qualitative data. SEM analysis of the questionnaire survey divulged that 65% variance of *Ecotourism* was well expounded by all four exogenous variables. Meanwhile, Leximancer analysis revealed six dominant themes which representing the perceptions of tourists to the inclusion of invertebrate in the ecotourism activities, in turn, this Leximancer finding used to support and strengthen the SEM findings. Consequently, the findings of this study are important to contribute to the literature of species conservation awareness in Sabah in which there are only few researches conducted specifically on the entotourism field. It would also contribute to the management and policy making of Sabah's tourism master plan in terms of introducing a new tourism product for Sabah as well as enhance the sustainability of ecotourism operators and encourage the competitiveness in the tourism industry. Lastly, these research findings are able to broaden the scope of ecotourism activities that would help to minimize the negative impacts of tourism that stressing more on the already endangered species.