

## **Preliminary survey on clam based tourism and conservation in Sabah**

### **ABSTRACT**

One nature-based attraction for nature lovers and ecotourists in Sabah is the variety of clam resources where exotic species such as Giant clam are protected under CITES and the Sabah Department of Fisheries. Clams are highly distributed in Sabah, attracting tourists and providing food sources for local people. Despite the popularity of clams, the relationship between clam consumption by the local community and tourists are least documented and studied in Sabah, implicating the management and conservation of clam resources through the perspective of local people and tourists. This research is significant in improving policies and decision-making for the long-term ecological and socio-economic sustainability of clam-based tourism and conservation in Sabah. Online surveys and in-person interviews on local people and tourists were conducted in Sandakan, Kota Kinabalu, Tawau and Kudat. Descriptive statistical methods, Chi-squared analysis, and factor analysis were used for analysing data. Findings suggest a relationship between clam consumption by the respondents with clam as traditional food of the respondents and the popularity of clam in the visited area. Factor analysis yielded two factors on the involvement of the local community in clam conservation and utilization in the visited area, and another two factors on the respondent's expectation based on their trip experiences in Sabah. The results also suggest that tourists commonly viewed the involvement of the local community in their visited area as more traditional-like. These views contradict clam conservation efforts in Sabah that adopt modern approaches while excluding the role of local people. This information is crucial in understanding the consumption of clam resources in Sabah's tourism industry, integrating with local cultures and adding value to clam conservation in Sabah.