

*From Valley to Plain: Conservation and Revitalisation from “Ng To” to Kuk
Po River and Plain via Multi-disciplinary Educational and Action Research*

Kuk Po: Visitor Perception Survey Report

4th Progress Report

Task E1.2

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Resource Management
The Chinese University of Hong Kong**

1 Introduction

Based on the inter-disciplinary research on the river valley of Kuk Po, the Department of Geography and Resource Management has developed an educational trail with different learning activities for Geography teaching and learning. This eco-cultural trail aims to increase students' understanding of Kuk Po from the perspective of human-environment relationship and to recognize the importance of indigenous knowledge in coping with environmental challenges. In order to enhance the field trip experiences, a field trip manual is designed which introduces how villagers lived with the environment in the past.

Field trips to Kuk Po were conducted from October to November, 2022. Visitors were guided by experienced staff to visit the 12 checkpoints (Figure 1), which covers the themes of (1) natural environment, (2) culture and architecture, (3) agriculture, and (4) indigenous knowledge. The purpose of the trip is to understand the place and to inspire visitors with solutions to current global issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, depletion of resources and consumerism etc.

In order to understand visitors' perception on Kuk Po and solicit their views on the educational trail, a visitor perception survey was carried out on 29/10/2022, 05/11/2022, 12/11/2022 and 20/11/2022. The survey was conducted in respect of:

- the image of Kuk Po; and
- the visitor satisfaction on the field trip.

The purpose of this report is to (1) analyse the data from the survey; and (2) give suggestions on the enhancement of visitors' experience and revitalization of Kuk Po.



Figure 1 12 Checkpoints of the Educational Trail (Map provided: Lands Department, HKSAR; Map produced: Department of Geography and Resource Management, The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

2 Survey on Visitor Experience and Satisfaction

2.1 Background of the Respondents

As the design of the educational trail is for field teaching, respondents are mainly university students. Some respondents are volunteers who participated in clean-up activities in Kuk Po. A total of 40 questionnaires were completed through face-to-face interview after touring the educational trail.

The majority of the respondents (82%) are aged between 18 to 24 years (Figure 2). 93% of them have attained tertiary education (Figure 3). Besides, 80% of the respondents are students (Figure 4). For the place of living, most of the respondents (43.6%) live in Sha Tin (Figure 5).

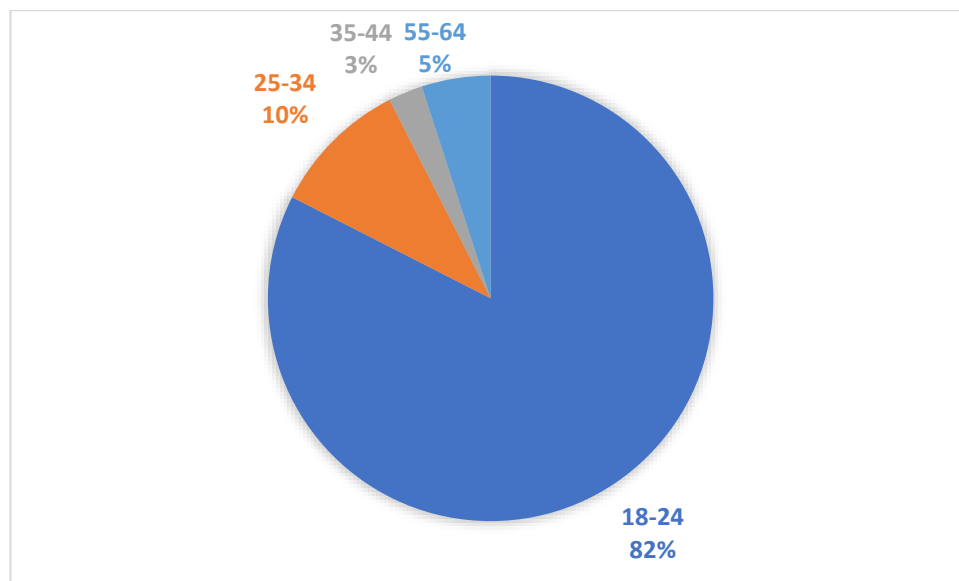


Figure 2 Age of the Respondents

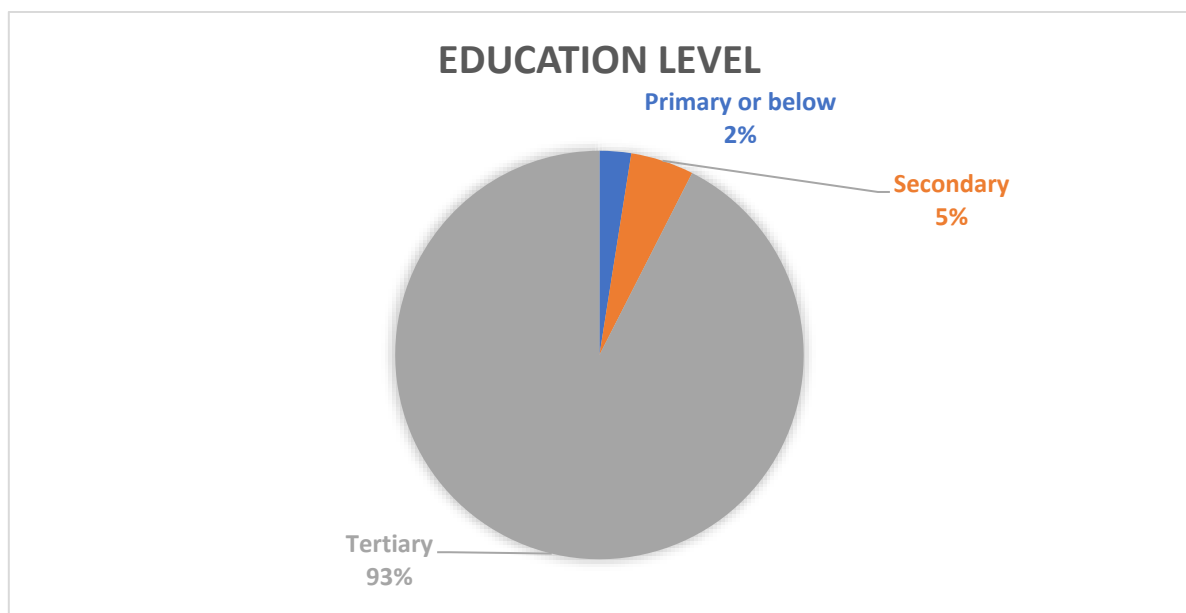


Figure 3 Education Level of the Respondents

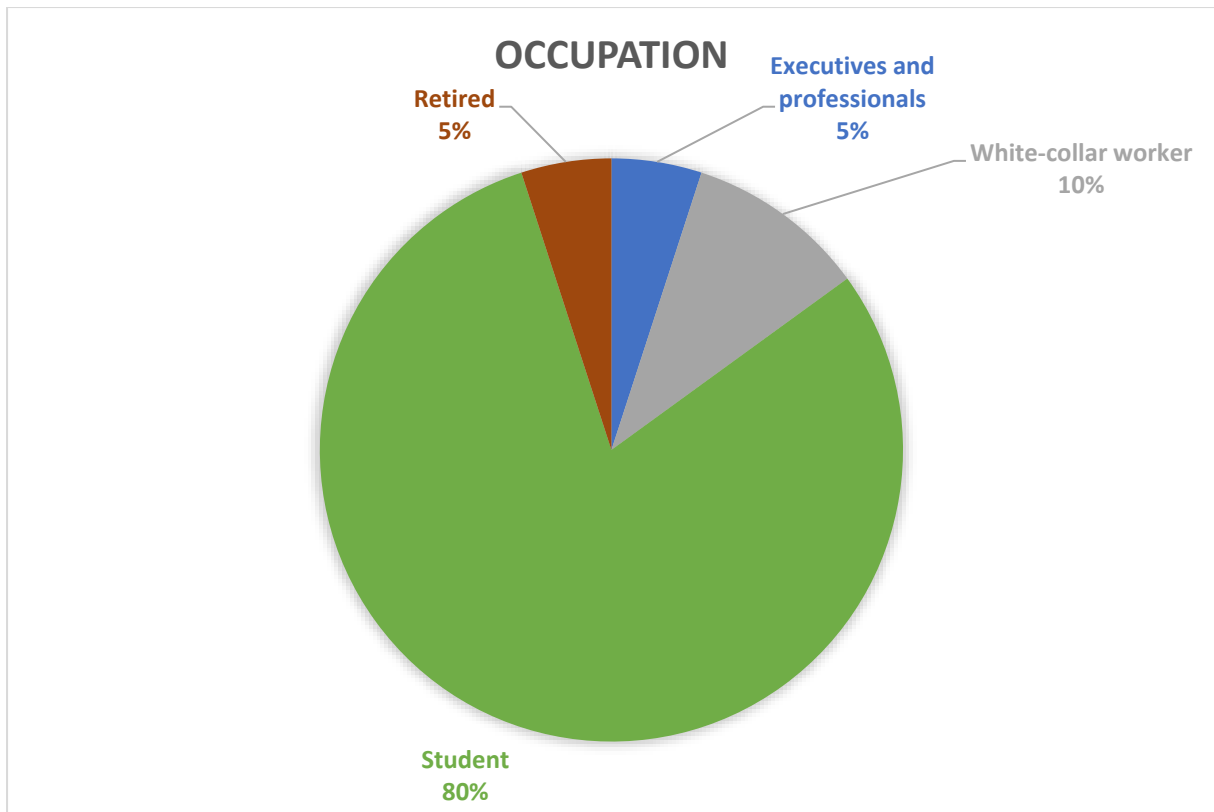


Figure 4 Respondents' Occupation

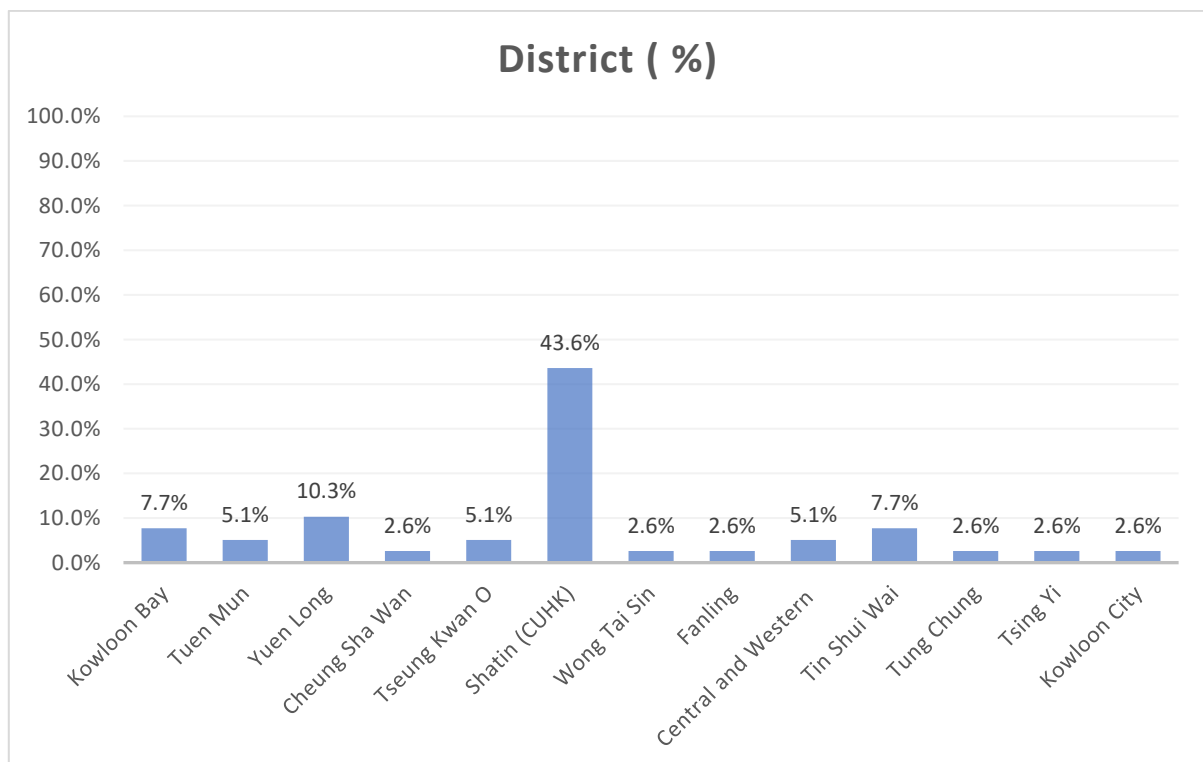


Figure 5 Living Place of the Respondents

2.2 Purpose of Visit

The majority of the respondents (70.0%) visit Kuk Po for relaxation. Hiking and looking for an adventure (55.0%), learn about nature and wildlife (47.5%), and learn the Hakka culture or way of life (47.5%) are also major trip purposes (Figure 6).

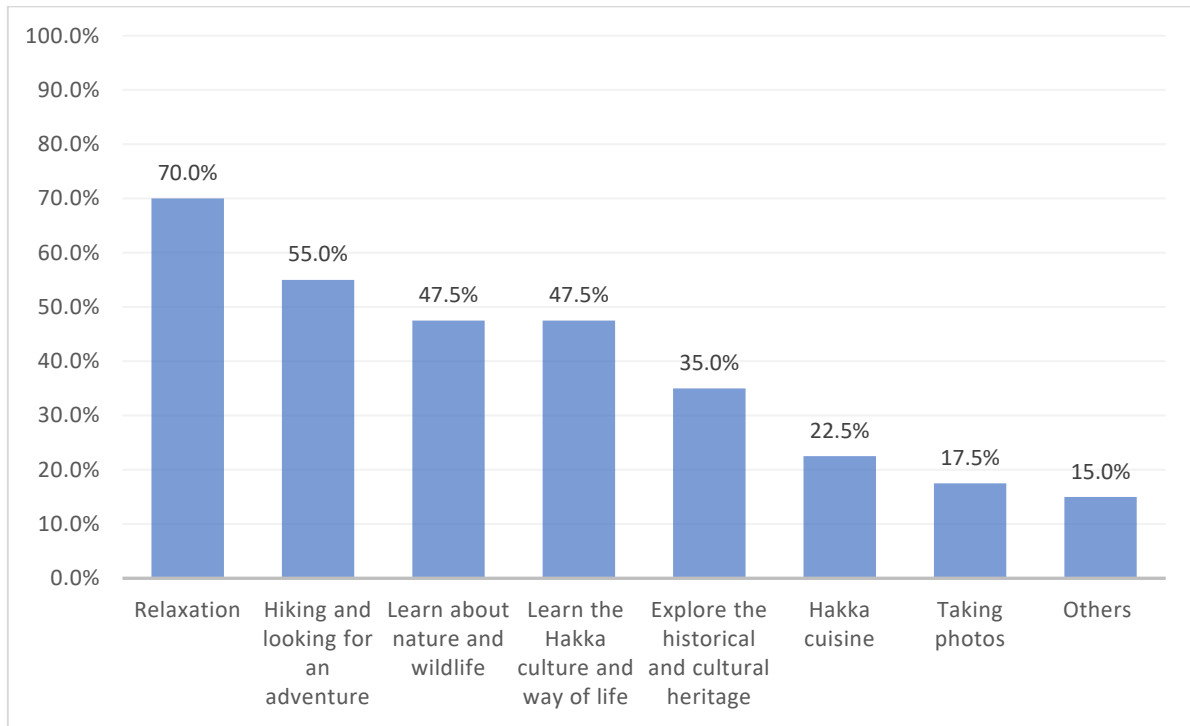


Figure 6 Purpose of Visit (multiple answers allowed)

3.3 Channels of knowing Kuk Po

Most of the visitors heard about Kuk Po through University (32.5%), social media (27.5%) and friends (27.5%) (Figure 7).

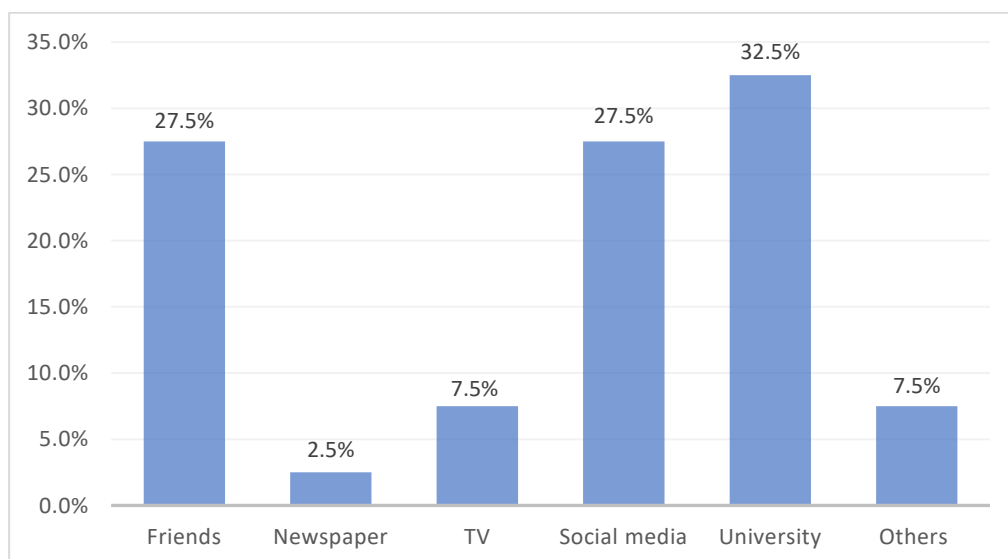


Figure 7 Channels of knowing Kuk Po (multiple answers allowed)

3 Image of Kuk Po

3.1 General Impression of Kuk Po

87.5% of the respondents have a strong image of natural landscape, while 47.5% and 42.5% of the respondents associate Kuk Po with Hakka village setting and Kuk Po's history, culture, and way of life respectively (Figure 8).

Among the 12 checkpoints, there are both natural landscapes (e.g. valley, mangroves, river, and woodland) and Hakka features (e.g. "hill, woods, house, pond, farmland" village setting, feng shui woods, *pak kung* etc.). Kuk Po's history, culture and way of life are also covered by the trail. For instance, visitors will learn the history and way of life by visiting Kai Choi School (school history), Kuk Po pier (commercial development in the past) and Tin Sum Tsuen (farming practices in the past). Therefore, the selected checkpoints are in line with their general impression of Kuk Po.

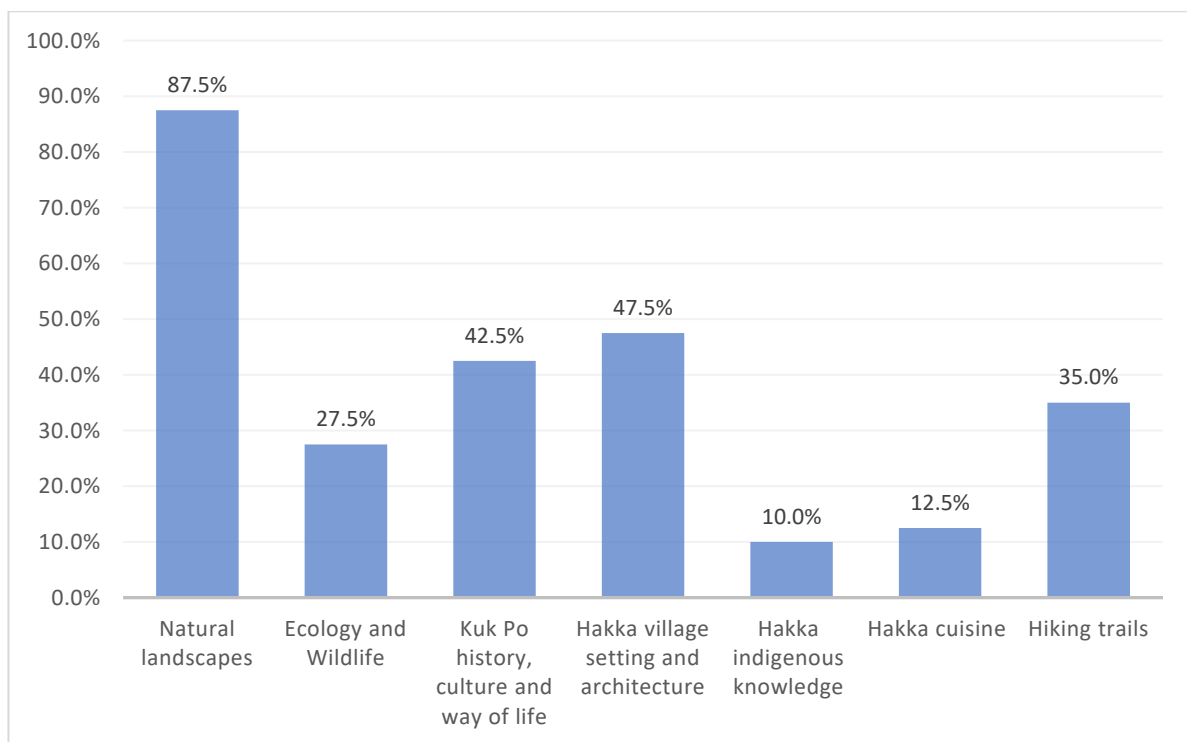


Figure 8 General Impression of Kuk Po (multiple answers allowed)

3.2 Destination Image

According to Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the overall destination image is formed by two separate components, namely cognitive image and affective image. The cognitive image component consists of beliefs and knowledge about a destination, primarily focusing on tangible physical attributes (Pike and Ryan, 2004), while the affective image component represents feelings about and attitudes towards the destination (Russell and Pratt, 1980; Lin et al., 2007) (Figure 9). Destination image plays an important role in shaping tourists' preferences and their decision to visit particular destinations as destination images that meet tourists'

preferences reinforce their choice of that destination (Goodall, 1990; Tapachai and Waryszak, 2000; Woodside and Lysonski, 1989).

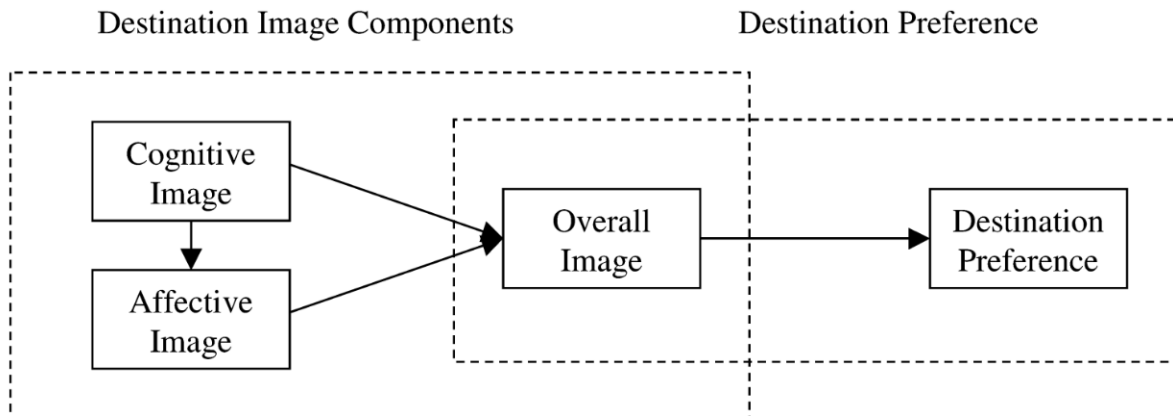


Figure 9 Destination Image Model (Source: Lin et al., 2007)

3.2.1 Cognitive Image of Kuk Po

Respondents were asked to rate a number of statements relating to the cognitive image of Kuk Po. In general, respondents are satisfied with most items (6 out of 7 items scored 4.0 or above) (Figure 10), which reflects that the educational trail has successfully delivered the knowledge about Kuk Po (that is, “*a historical Hakka village where Kuk Po River serves as a natural thread linking the typical Hakka villages with rich cultural and ecological resources, which exemplifies a harmonious human-environment relationship*”) to visitors.

Items that have higher scores are “Kuk Po is a Hakka village with a long history” (4.30), “Valley and Kuk Po river form an unique natural landscape” (4.25) and “Kuk Po reflects a typical Hakka village layout and architecture” (4.23). However, “I can enjoy Hakka cuisine in Kuk Po.” has the lowest score (3.65). It is because there is no checkpoint or time for visitors to enjoy a Hakka lunch during the tour.

In order to further enhance the tourist experience in terms of learning Hakka culture and special way of life, it is suggested to include more interactive activities at the checkpoints, such as participating in traditional Hakka festivals, experiencing farming by using Hakka-style tools, and learning Hakka language etc. Regarding the item with the lowest score, it is suggested to invite villagers to cook Hakka food (e.g. 瀨鑊邊) for visitors.

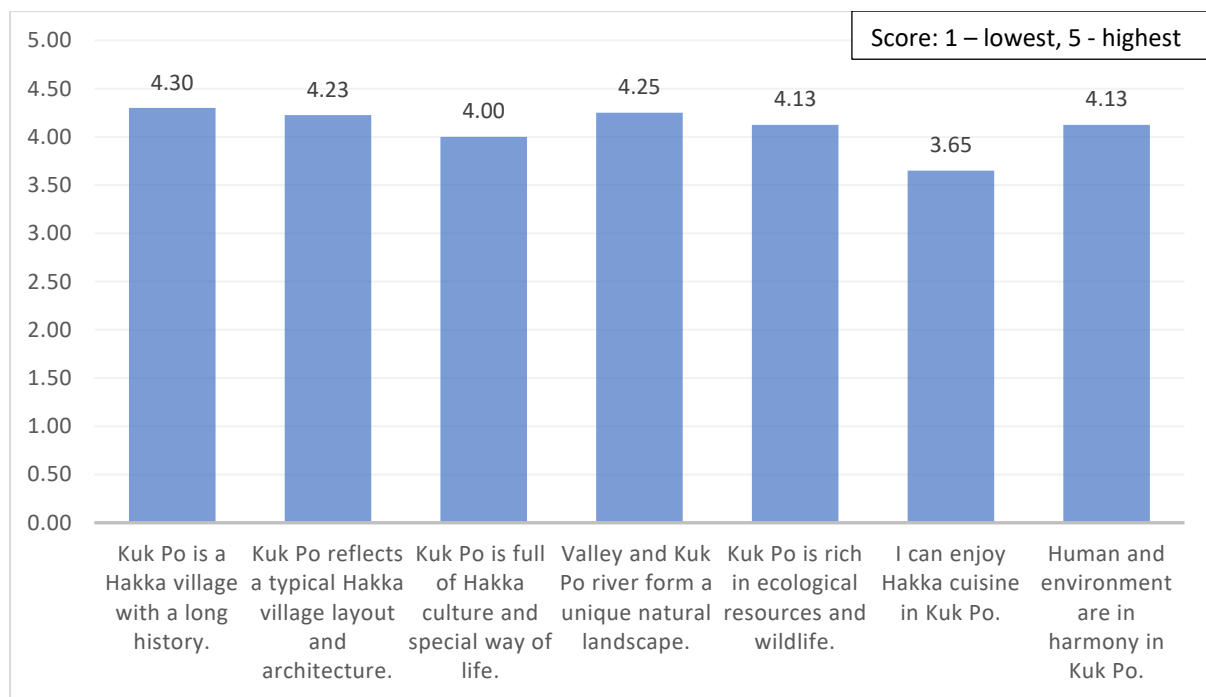


Figure 10 Cognitive Image of Kuk Po

3.2.2 Affective Image of Kuk Po

Respondents were asked to rate a number of statements relating to the affective image of Kuk Po. In general, respondents are satisfied with most items (3 out of 4 items scored 4.0 or above) (Figure 11), which reflects that visitors have positive feelings after the tour.

When comparing different feelings, respondents rated higher scores on feeling “relaxed” (4.45) “pleasant” (4.28) and “aroused” (4.08). As most of the activities along the trail are rather passive, visitors may not feel excited which partly explains the lower score of excitement after the tour (3.78). Therefore, in order to further arouse the interest of visitors, it is suggested to add more active activities, such as interaction with nature and villagers.

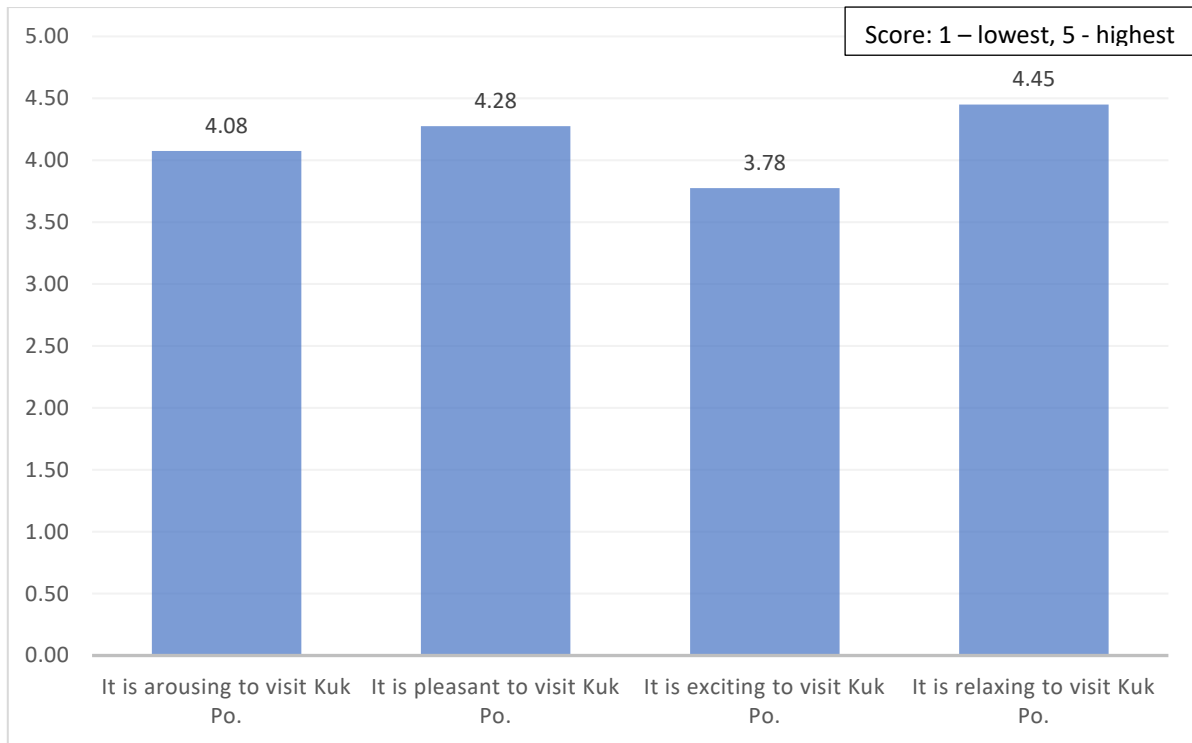


Figure 11 Affective Image of Kuk Po

4 Visitor Satisfaction

4.1 Visitor Satisfaction on Field Trip Design

Respondents are satisfied with most of the items on field trip design (Figure 12 & 13). In particular, narration of the field trip, trip design, trail content and field trip manual are all rated above 4.0. It shows that the design of the eco-cultural trail and the field trip manual has achieved its educational purpose in enhancing the understanding of Kuk Po and arousing their awareness towards environmental challenges. The 2 items with lower scores are accessibility and facilities of Kuk Po (3.70 and 3.15 respectively).

For the accessibility, it is suggested to provide water transport from the Sha Tau Kok pier which only takes 5 minutes to Kuk Po instead of hiking for 45 minutes. However, the feasibility of this approach requires further investigation on the closed area policy.

For the facilities in Kuk Po, many visitors considered that sanitary facilities and mobile network should be improved in order to attract more visitors to Kuk Po. Basic infrastructure and facilities are vital for the revitalization of Kuk Po.

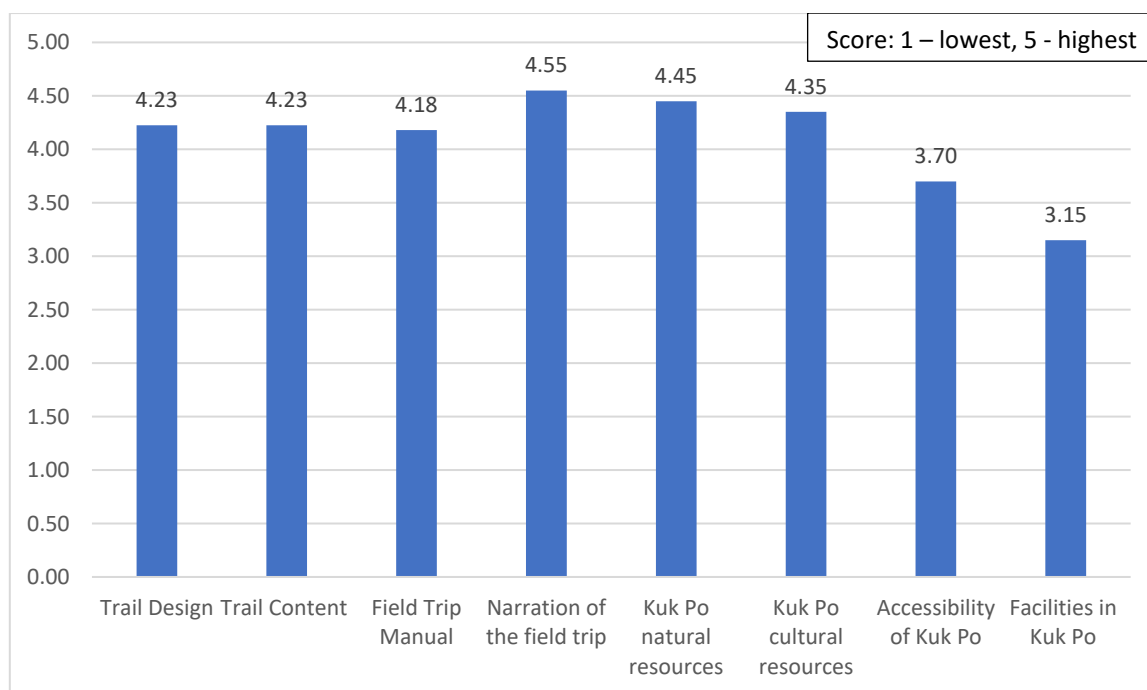


Figure 12 Tourist Satisfaction on field trip design

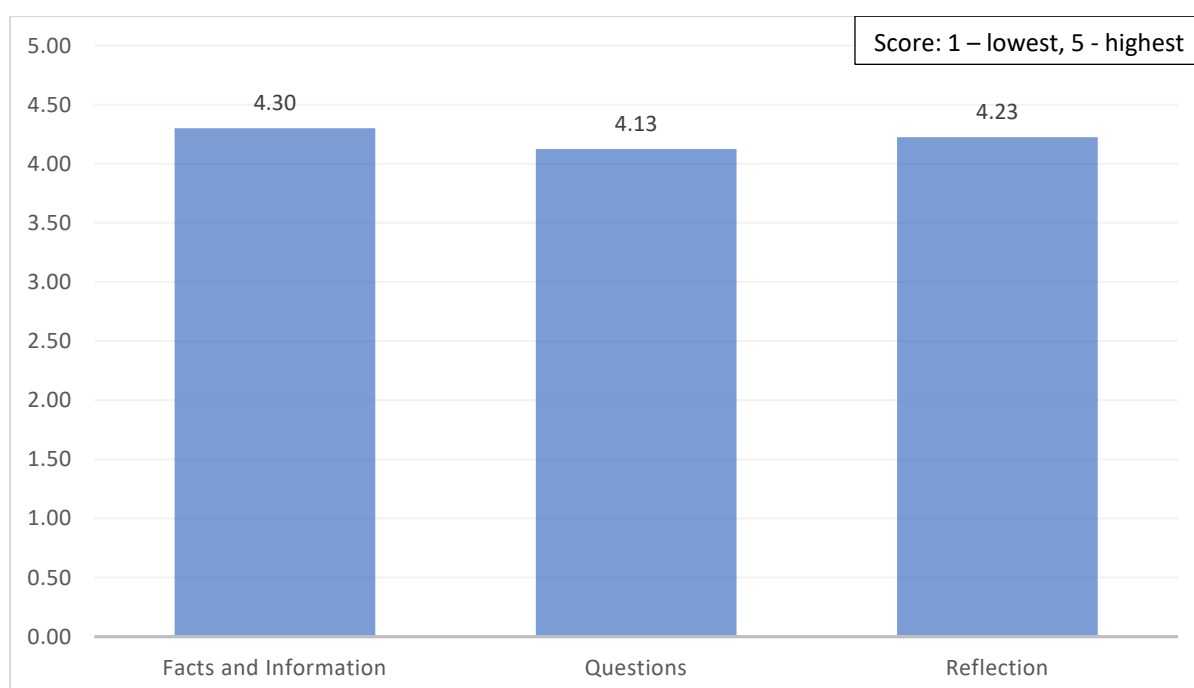


Figure 13 Tourist Satisfaction on the Field Trip Manual

4.2 Visitor Experiences

All visitors have positive responses towards their visitor experiences. (Figure 14). They know more about the history, natural landscape, Hakka culture, indigenous knowledge of villagers, uniqueness of Kuk Po and human-environment relationship (scores above 4.0). In particular, “I learn about how villagers live with the environment in the past” scored the highest (4.45) among all items. It reflects that the educational trail has successfully achieved its teaching and learning purpose.

However, the 2 items with the lowest score are “From the indigenous knowledge of Kuk Po villagers, I learnt how sustainable development can be achieved” (3.95) and “From the indigenous knowledge of Kuk Po villagers, I am inspired by the indigenous knowledge of Kuk Po villagers on tackling global issues” (3.78). These two items require us to think in depth about sustainable development and our daily life. Although the scores are still above average score, it shows that visitors have difficulties in relating indigenous knowledge and sustainable practices in the past to current global challenges.

This education trail is designed to provide an opportunity to visitors to rethink our daily practices and inspire them with solutions to current global issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, depletion of resources and consumerism. It is suggested to include more self-reflective and opinion-exchanging activities, such as dialogue with local villagers, farming and voluntary work, so that they can learn through practicing.

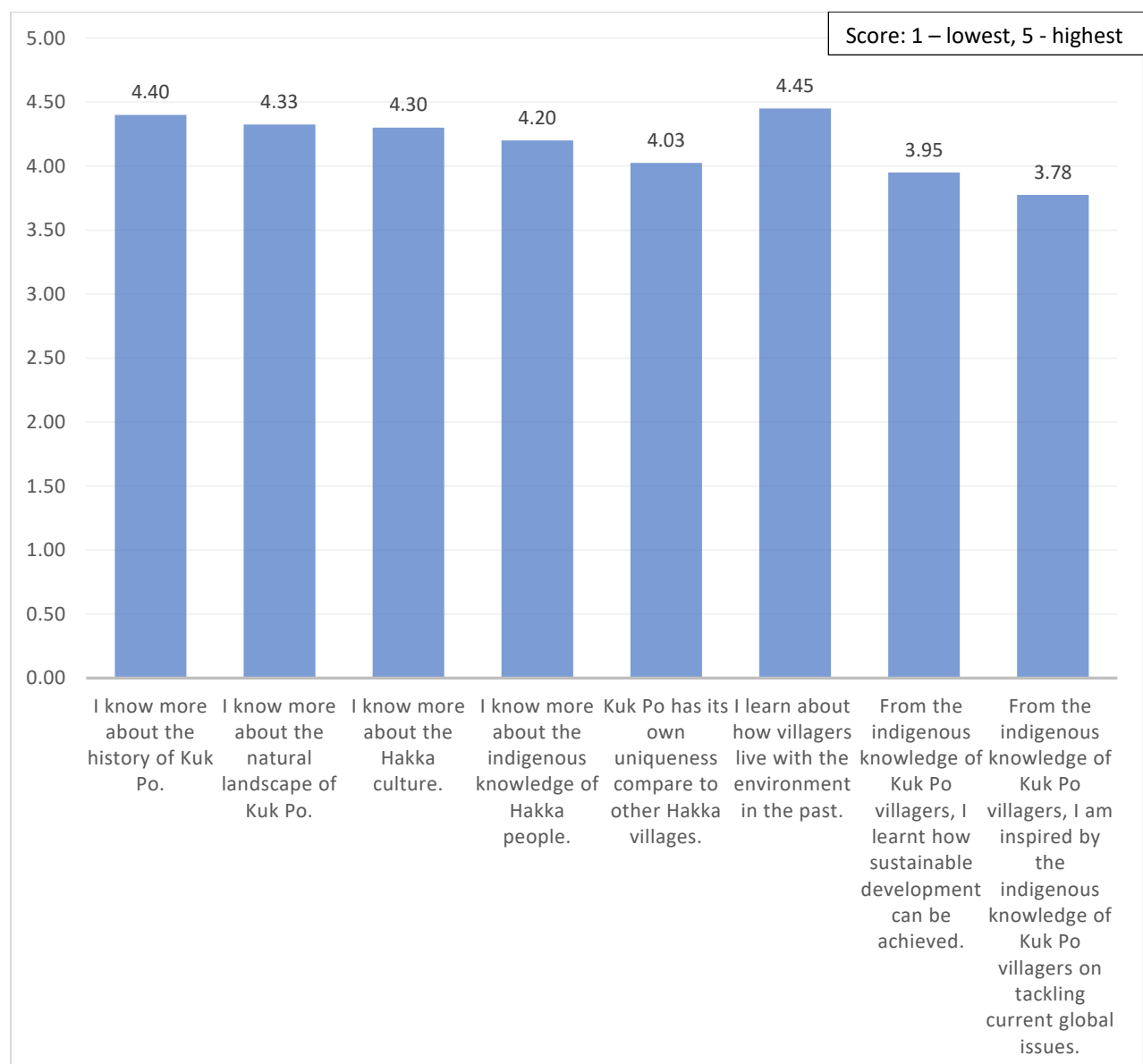


Figure 14 Tourist Experiences

5 Overall Image of Kuk Po

Most of the visitors have good image on Kuk Po (4.33) (Figure 15) and will recommend Kuk Po to others (4.25) (Figure 16). However, the statement of “I will visit Kuk Po again” scored lower than 4.0. At present, there are inadequate tourism resources and activities that encourage repeat visitation. In order to attract visitors to re-visit, it is suggested to develop activities that allow visitors to participate and contribute to environmental conservation. This can create a sense of belonging and let them feel part of the community. Therefore, regenerative activities (e.g. volunteer services) that require active and regular participation of visitors can be one of the possible options.

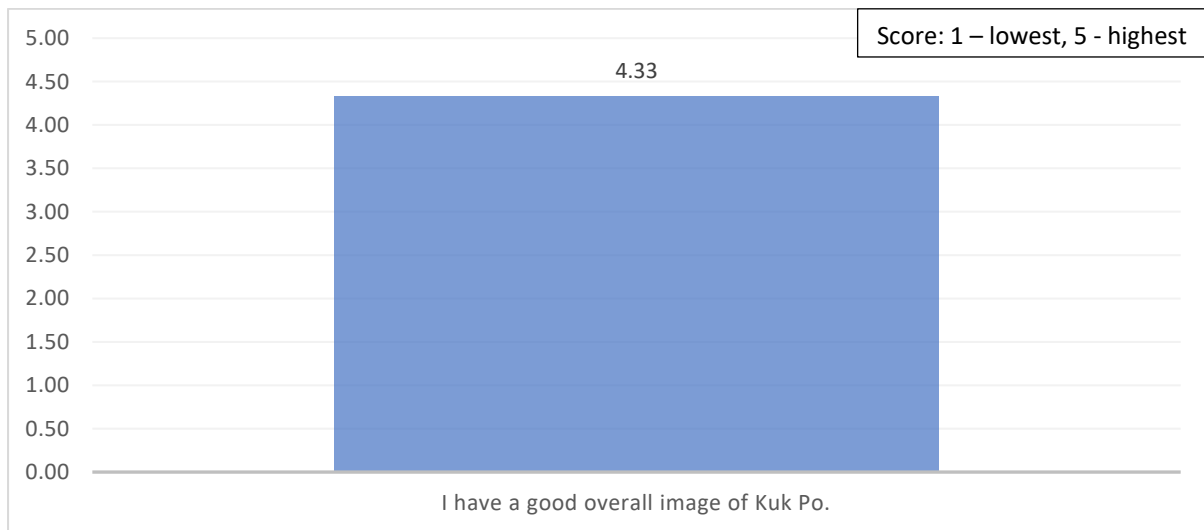


Figure 15 Overall Image of Kuk Po

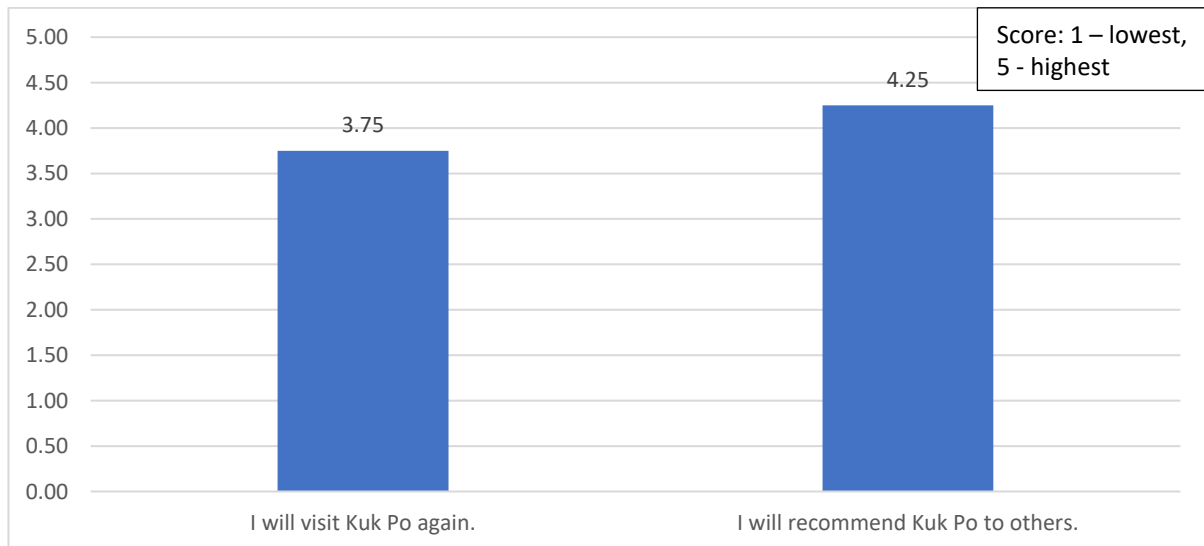


Figure 16 Perception on Future Visit

7 Conclusion and Recommendation

To conclude, the educational trail has received positive feedbacks from the visitors. In order to further enhance visitor experiences, some suggestions are listed below.

- Regarding the accessibility, tourists are less satisfied with the accessibility and facilities in Kuk Po. It is suggested to explore the possibility of regular boat services from Sha Tau Kok pier during weekends and public holidays.
- For the hardware, the sanitary facilities in Kuk Po should be improved. Inadequate proper and clean toilet is a common problem in the countryside of Hong Kong. It is suggested to install a “eco-friendly” toilet system in Kuk Po. The internet and mobile network should also be improved.
- For the software, there is a need to develop more interactive, active and self-reflective activities so as to revitalize Kuk Po. As shown in the survey, the educational trail has successfully increased visitor understanding on the cultural and natural landscapes. However, there is a need to provide them with an opportunity to think in depth about the sustainable development of the countryside. In this respect, regenerative tourism activities may be a good option to enhance visitor experiences.
- Driven by the idea of regenerative tourism, some regenerative activities in the form of voluntary work can be designed in Kuk Po. Regenerative tourism is a transformational approach that aims to create net positive effects through increasing the regenerative capacity of human societies and ecosystems while the participation of indigenous people should be included (Bellato, et al., 2022). By designing some clean-up or farming activities, visitors could help restore the place and promote the wellbeing of villagers. In this way, local villagers are also empowered and involved in the regeneration of Kuk Po.
- As an educational institution, we can perform the role of delivering knowledge, engaging students through service learning, empowering villagers, establishing mutual trust with local community, and hence contributing to the sustainable development of Kuk Po.

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