

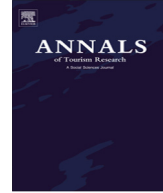


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The influence of place identity on perceived tourism impacts



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate if local residents' senses of place identity could affect their attitudes toward tourism. Deploying a survey on urban residents in a Midwest state in the USA, the present study finds place-based self-esteem and self-efficacy affect residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and support for tourism. While tourism literature suggests social exchange theory to be a useful tool in predicting resident perceptions and attitudes from the perspective of the quality of social exchange of resources (i.e. depending on getting more or losing more), this study adds a new perspective in gauging resident perceptions and attitudes by utilizing place identity theory as a theoretical underpinning instead. This study recommends that place identity theory and social exchange theory complement each other and be both utilized in assessing resident attitudes toward tourism development.

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Introduction

Resident attitude toward tourism development is very important, because friendly interactions between visitors and residents create a significant effect on visitors' satisfaction with the destination (Pizam, Uriely, & Reichel, 2000). While urban cities are increasingly viewing tourism as an important tool in restoring and revitalizing economic development, resulting in improved quality of life for residents and visitors, tourism planners must pay a special attention to place-based perceptions and the expectations of local population. The above thinking is attributed to the fact that tourism is essentially

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a place-based phenomenon, involving the production of destination identity at different scales (Hall, 1998). Further, tourism businesses are actively engaged in presenting and promoting place identity, in order to attract tourists and increase market share (Dredge & Jenkins, 2003).

In developing tourist destinations, the preferences and interests of visitors are often put ahead of those who reside and work at these locations; however, resident's needs and concerns have often been neglected and subordinated to tourism development (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005). To avoid potential conflicts and win a support from the host community, it is advantageous to enlist local residents in the process of tourism development. Like the lessons learned from the past, local residents are likely to gain a satisfactory view on tourism development, as their community's quality of life could be enhanced (Williams & Lawson, 2001). Therefore, addressing place-based views and concerns of residents is critical in maintaining public support for tourism (Andereck & Vogt, 2000).

According to Gu and Ryan (2008), attitude toward tourism is not solely explained in terms of social exchange theory (SET), but in terms of personal value systems. As compared with the application of social exchange theory in tourism, recent tourism literature has taken on the issue of place identity in understanding resident attitudes toward tourism (Gu & Ryan, 2008; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Palme, Koenig-Lewis, & Jones, 2013). Nevertheless, extant studies have not systematically examined the relationship between place-based identity and resident attitudes toward tourism impact and development. This study aims to fill this research gap, by incorporating place identity concept into tourism development theories, while analyzing the associations between place identity and residents' attitudes toward tourism and their support for tourism. More specifically, this study posits to test a conceptual model, depicting relationships between place identity components and residents' support for tourism.

Literature review

Resident perceptions of tourism impacts has been widely discussed in the tourism literature (e.g. Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2007; Ap, 1992; Choi & Murray, 2010; Schroeder, 1996), and most of the studies have applied SET to explain the relationship between resident attitudes and tourism impacts.

Social exchange theory (SET) and tourism

SET is based on the assumption that tourism development comes with economic benefits in exchange for social and environmental impacts. Ap (1992) explicated SET as "a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation" (p. 668). According to Ap (1992), SET assumes social relations involves an exchange of resources among parties seeking mutual benefits from the exchange relationship. As suggested by Ap, when applied to tourism development, SET conjectures that resident attitudes toward tourism are influenced by whether the outcomes are perceived as beneficial to the individual and/or the community, and when exchange of resources is high or balanced, or high for the host party in an unbalanced relationship, tourism impacts are viewed positively by residents, and vice versa. Bearing this in mind, SET is viewed by tourism researchers as an appropriate framework upon which to structure studies measuring resident attitudes towards tourism impacts (Andereck et al., 2007). Choi and Murray (2010) proposed that, SET is the most popular theory to explain the relationship between resident perceptions of tourism and its impacts.

The SET approach seems to presume that resident attitude toward tourism is generally passive or reactive; however, resident attitude toward tourism is not solely explained in terms of social exchange theory, but in terms of personal value systems as suggested by Gu and Ryan (2008). McCool and Martin (1994) observed that residents with a strong place attachment rated the positive dimension of tourism higher than unattached residents. One contribution of McCool and Martin's study is, in analyzing how tourism is perceived by residents, researchers should incorporate place identity principles in the study model. In contrast with SET, place identity theories tend to suggest the primary dynamism in influencing resident attitudes toward tourism may originate from his or her self-concept

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