



Residents' support for tourism development: The role of residents' place image and perceived tourism impacts



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HIGHLIGHTS

- The need for a non-forced measurement of perceived tourism impacts is highlighted.
- Perceived impacts should be explored in line with the triple bottom line approach.
- Perceived economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts exercise a positive effect on support.
- Place image is central to the understanding of residents' perceived impacts and support.

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on the triple bottom line approach for tourism impacts (economic, socio-cultural and environmental) and adopting a non-forced approach for measuring residents' perception of these impacts, this study explores the role of residents' place image in shaping their support for tourism development. The tested model proposes that residents' place image affects their perceptions of tourism impacts and in turn their support for tourism development. The results stress the need for a more flexible and resident-oriented measurement of tourism impacts, revealing that more favorable perceptions of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts lead to greater support. Moreover, while residents' place image has been largely neglected by tourism development studies, the findings of this study reveal its significance in shaping residents' perception of tourism impacts as well as their level of support. The practical implications of the findings for tourism planning and development are also discussed.

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1. Introduction

Tourism development renders various economic, socio-cultural and environmental changes on the host community's life, some more beneficial than others (Lee, 2013). Thus, the participation and support of local residents is imperative for the sustainability of the tourism industry at any destination (Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2010). Understanding the residents' perspective can facilitate policies which minimize the potential negative impacts of tourism development and maximize its benefits, leading to community development and greater support for tourism (Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo, & Alders, 2013). A rich body of literature investigates the relationships between residents' perceived impacts of tourism and

their support for tourism development (e.g., Gursoy et al., 2010; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). Yet, most of these studies adopt an *a priori* categorization of potential impacts (into positive or negative economic, social-cultural and environmental impacts or simply costs and benefits), whereas limited attention is given to the residents' own evaluation of the extent to which they perceive an impact as being positive or negative (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005).

Additionally, recognizing the uniqueness of destinations, much attention has been given to the role of place attachment in shaping residents' perceived impacts and support for tourism development (e.g., Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Lee, 2013). Another factor relevant to the understanding of residents' reaction to tourism is place image. Despite the importance assigned to place image in understanding tourists' attitudes and behavior in the tourism literature (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Gallarza, Saura, & García, 2002), only a few studies have explored the image that residents hold of their place and even fewer have investigated its influence on their attitudes

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and reaction to tourism development (Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2011; Schroeder, 1996). If tourism development is to benefit the local community, attention should also be given to the residents' image of the place rather than that of tourists' only. Moreover, place attachment is a rather stable psychological trait (Govers, Go, & Kumar, 2007) whereas image is a dynamic construct built upon the perceived place attributes, which may change and evolve with time. As such, image may be more suitable to capturing residents' reaction toward the changes to the place inflicted by tourism development.

To address the aforementioned research gaps, this study draws on the triple bottom line approach of perceived impacts (economic, socio-cultural and environmental) and adopts a non-forced approach (Ap & Crompton, 1998; Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams, 1997) to their measurement. The non-forced approach aims to provide a more nuanced and accurate reflection of the residents' perceptions of tourism impacts. In addition, this study investigates whether residents' image of their own place influences their perceptions of the economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism, and support for further tourism development. As part of this, environmental psychology studies and place image literature were used to achieve a more comprehensive reflection of residents' place image, and its relationships with their support for tourism development.

2. Residents' support for tourism development

Since the goodwill and cooperation of the local community is essential for the success and sustainability of any tourism development project, the understanding of residents' views and the solicitation of such support is of great importance for local government, policy makers and businesses (Dyer, Gursoy, Sharma, & Carter, 2007; Lee, 2013; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). Indeed, this has been a subject for on-going research in tourism (Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012). Early studies have been criticized for being descriptive, offering no explanation as to why residents perceive and respond to tourism as they do (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). To provide a more insightful explanation of the factors shaping residents' support, later studies adopted various theoretical frameworks, such as Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action (e.g., Dyer et al., 2007) and Social Representation Theory (e.g., Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) has been the most commonly accepted framework in explaining residents' reaction to tourism development, since it allows for the capturing of differing views based on experiential and psychological outcomes (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; Prayag et al., 2013). SET considers social interactions as an exchange of resources, suggesting that individuals are likely to engage in an exchange if they expect to gain benefits from it without incurring unacceptable costs (Ap, 1992). In relation to tourism, residents' attitude is built upon their evaluation of tourism "in terms of expected benefits or costs obtained in return for the services they supply" (Ap, 1992, p. 669). If the perceived positive impacts (benefits) outweigh the potential negative consequences (costs), residents are likely to support tourism development (Dyer et al., 2007; Gursoy et al., 2010; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Lee, 2013). As such, residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism are an important consideration for successful development and operation of tourism (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; McGehee & Andereck, 2004).

2.1. Residents' perception of tourism impacts

Past studies suggest that the three main elements involved in the exchange process of tourism development are economic, socio-

cultural and environmental impacts (e.g., Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Vargas-Sánchez, Plaza-Mejía, & Porras-Bueno, 2009). This is also in line with the triple bottom line approach to impacts, commonly used in sustainable tourism development literature (Andersson & Lundberg, 2013; Prayag et al., 2013). Additionally, it is recognized that tourism has the potential for both favorable and unfavorable impacts on the local community with regard to each of these exchange domains (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Prayag et al., 2013). For instance, tourism may increase employment opportunities and improve standards of living, but may increase the cost of living (Ko & Stewart, 2002; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Upchurch & Teivane, 2000). Tourism development enhances cultural exchange and provision of recreational opportunities, but can lead to increased crime rates (Ap & Crompton, 1998; Dyer et al., 2007). Often tourism is considered responsible for environmental pollution, noise and congestion (Latkova & Vogt, 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010). However, it may also have positive environmental impacts by improving the area's appearance and enhancing natural and cultural protection (Ko & Stewart, 2002; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2009).

Drawing on SET, numerous studies have verified the significance of residents' perception of tourism impacts in influencing their support for tourism development (e.g., Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011, 2012). Yet, there is a lack of agreement in the literature regarding the classification and measurement of residents' perception of impacts. A review of the literature reveals three main approaches, which have been adopted in previous studies. These can be termed as the *costs–benefits approach*, *domain related costs–benefits approach* and the *non-forced approach* (see Table 1). The first and the most prevalent approach is the *costs–benefits approach* (Lee, 2013; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). Studies following this approach group the potential impacts of tourism into two dimensions of costs and benefits (or positive/negative impacts), generally indicating a direct negative relationship between perceived costs and support for tourism development and a direct positive relationship between perceived benefits and support (e.g., Lee, 2013; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). While this approach is uncomplicated and straightforward, it overlooks the impacts of tourism on the diverse aspects of community life (i.e., economic, socio-cultural and environmental). Therefore, it provides only a partial understanding of the ways in which perceived impacts influence residents' support, which may hinder the predictive strength of the structural model (Gursoy et al., 2010; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012) and is less insightful for sustainable development and the marketing of new projects (Prayag et al., 2013).

Studies adopting the *domain related costs–benefits approach* aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between perceived impacts and residents' support by considering both the nature (positive/negative or cost/benefit) and domain (economic, socio-cultural, environmental) of impacts. Here, studies have delineated impacts into several areas of perceived positive and negative environmental, social/cultural and economic impacts. For instance, Gursoy and Rutherford (2004) examined the influence of economic benefits, social benefits, social costs, cultural benefits and cultural costs on residents' support (see also Dyer et al., 2007; Gursoy et al., 2010). More recent studies explored six areas of negative and positive economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts (Prayag et al., 2013). Similar to the costs–benefits approach, the domain related costs–benefits approach hypothesizes direct positive relationships between the economic, socio-cultural and environmental benefits and support, and direct negative relationships between the economic, socio-cultural and environmental costs and residents' support (Dyer et al., 2007; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Gursoy et al., 2010).

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