



A revised framework of social exchange theory to investigate the factors influencing residents' perceptions



S. Mostafa Rasoolimanesh^{a,*}, Mastura Jaafar^a, Ned Kock^b, T. Ramayah^c

^a School of Housing, Building, and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia

^b Division of International Business and Technology Studies, Texas A&M International University, 5201 University Boulevard, Laredo, TX 78041, USA

^c School of Management Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800 Penang, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors influencing residents' perceptions and support for tourism development. Integrating a revised theory of social exchange and previous research has led to the development of a framework with which to conceptualize these relationships. This study was conducted in Lenggong Valley, a newly recognized World Heritage Site in Malaysia. The findings revealed strong positive effects for economic gain and involvement in the planning and management process on residents' perceptions. Community attachment, environmental attitudes, and age also affected residents' perceptions. The results of our study suggest that perceptions strongly influence support for tourism development. In using a revised social exchange theory framework, this study makes a significant theoretical contribution to the tourism and resident perception literature. Furthermore, this study has a number of practical implications for Lenggong Valley's local authorities in terms of sustainable management.

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1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world today, contributing approximately 9% to the world's total GDP (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2014). It is estimated that around 1087 million international travelers and 5–6 billion domestic tourists visited various tourism destinations worldwide in 2013 (World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2014). Therefore, tourism can potentially affect the living standards of tourist destination residents (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). However, the success or failure of a tourism development depends heavily on the concerns and perceptions of the local community regarding the development (Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Sharpley, 2014). Residents' support of tourism development and the sustainability of the said development are contingent upon how local residents perceive the impact of tourism development on their communities (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009; Wang & Pfister, 2008).

Previous studies have explored residents' perceptions toward tourism development. These studies suggest that residents are acutely

aware of the possible negative and positive impacts of development (Andereck et al., 2005; Ap, 1992; Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013; Sharpley, 1994, 2014; Vareiro, Remoaldo, & Cadima Ribeiro, 2013). Tourism can positively influence the lives of local residents with increased income, employment opportunities, improved standards of living, improved public infrastructure, increased availability of recreational and entertainment facilities, and the promotion and preservation of local culture (Andereck et al., 2005; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2012; Ko & Stewart, 2002; McGehee, Andereck, & Vogt, 2002). However, tourism also has the potential to negatively impact local communities by increasing the cost of living, raising property prices, exacerbating overcrowding and traffic congestion, and increasing the prevalence of crime and drugs (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Deery et al., 2012; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Liu & Var, 1986; Tosun, 2002).

Focusing on the perceived positive impact of tourism encourages the community to support tourism development, while focusing on the perceived negative effects reduces residents support for tourism development (Sharpley, 2014). These positive and negative perceptions are influenced by a range of factors that have been extensively explored in the literature (Andereck et al., 2005; Ap, 1992; Gursoy et al., 2002; Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams, 1997; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Látková & Vogt, 2012; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Nicholas et al., 2009; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990; Wang & Pfister, 2008). Residents' perceptions of tourism development are mediated by the potential for economic gain, economic involvement, community attachment, environmental attitudes and values, their degree of involvement in the planning and

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: rasooli1352@yahoo.com, mostafa@usm.my (S.M. Rasoolimanesh), masturaj@usm.my (M. Jaafar), nedkock@tamiu.edu (N. Kock), ramayah@usm.my (T. Ramayah).

decision-making process, and demographic factors (Andereck et al., 2005; Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Gursoy et al., 2002; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Jurowski et al., 1997; McCool & Martin, 1994; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Nicholas et al., 2009; Tosun, 2002). Moreover, a range of theories have been applied to the investigation of the effect of these factors, including social exchange theory (Ap, 1992; Gursoy et al., 2002; Jurowski et al., 1997; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Látková & Vogt, 2012), stakeholder theory (Nicholas et al., 2009), and Weber's theory of formal and substantive rationality (Boley, McGehee, Perdue, & Long, 2014).

Nonetheless, social exchange theory (SET) is pervasive throughout these studies (Sharpley, 2014). SET is a theoretical framework used to explain the positive and negative perceptions of host communities (Andereck et al., 2005; Andriotis, 2005; Jurowski et al., 1997; Wang & Pfister, 2008). According to SET, if residents perceive the benefits of tourism development to outweigh the costs of development they will be more inclined to support tourism development (Andriotis, 2005; Jurowski et al., 1997). However, a number of recent studies have called into question the ability of SET to explain the factors influencing residents' perceptions (Andereck et al., 2005; Sharpley, 2014). In response to these criticisms, we have adopted a revised framework for SET (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). We present an integrated framework of factors influencing residents' perceptions, including demographic characteristics, as well as economic, social, and environmental factors based on this revised framework.

While, most studies of residents' perceptions toward tourism development have been conducted in developed countries, such as North America, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, few studies have focused on the developing world (Sharpley, 2014). Furthermore, few studies have examined residents' perceptions in the context of a World Heritage Site (WHS) (Jimura, 2011; Nicholas et al., 2009). The current study has been conducted in a newly recognized WHS located in the Malaysian state of Perak. Lenggong Valley was recognized as a WHS on 30 June 2012 due to its rich archeological heritage, showing evidence of human settlement during the Paleolithic era.

The current study, therefore, represents an integrated model of the factors influencing residents' perceptions and support for tourism development based on a revised SET framework, and examines this model in the context of a WHS in Malaysia. The technique of partial least squares applied in the context of structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), an advanced multivariate analysis technique recommended for theory development (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011), has been employed to examine the proposed model. As such, this study makes a unique contribution to the resident perception literature, both from a theoretical and methodological perspective.

2. Literature review

2.1. Residents' perceptions toward the impacts of tourism development

Several previous studies have explored the perceived impacts of tourism development on local communities (Andereck et al., 2005; Ap, 1992; Hall & Page, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Sharpley, 1994, 2014; Vareiro et al., 2013). The development of local tourism industries and infrastructure, and subsequent interactions with tourists, have a direct effect on communities (Sharpley, 1994). These forces can result in changes to a community's values, behavior patterns, lifestyles, and resident's quality of life (Andereck et al., 2005; Hall & Page, 2014).

Tourism can exert a range of economic, social, and environmental effects on host communities. Positive economic effects include increasing family incomes, raising the standard of living, creating more jobs and employment opportunities, and improving tax revenues (Andereck et al., 2005; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Ko & Stewart, 2002). The negative economic effects of tourism, as identified in the literature, include increasing the cost of living (Liu & Var, 1986), raising the price of

properties, goods and other products (Andereck et al., 2005; Brunt & Courtney, 1999), and increasing property taxes (Látková & Vogt, 2012).

Several studies have explored the positive and negative effects of tourism on local communities from the social perspective (Deery et al., 2012; Haobin Ye, Qiu Zhang, Huawen Shen, & Goh, 2014; McGehee et al., 2002). Tourism increases the availability of recreational and entertainment facilities (Tovar & Lockwood, 2008); facilitates an understanding of cultural identity as well as the preservation and revival of traditional arts, culture, and handicrafts (Kim, 2002), and encourages the community to take pride in their culture (McGehee et al., 2002). The negative social effects of tourism development include alterations to the value systems of families and family relationships (Kousis, 1989); overcrowding of facilities and services, as well traffic congestion on roads (Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Liu & Var, 1986); increasing the incidence of crime and the availability of drugs (Deery et al., 2012; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Tosun, 2002); increased prostitution (Akama & Kieti, 2007; Park & Stokowski, 2009; Matarrita-Cascante, 2010); more litter, and public alcoholism (Ko & Stewart, 2002; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Tosun, 2002). Moreover, from an environmental viewpoint, the negative potential consequences of tourism development include damage to the natural environment and ecosystems; and increased air, water, and other forms of environmental pollutants (Ko & Stewart, 2002). Community members face a critical dilemma in supporting the development of tourism in their community (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). While the perceived positive effects of tourism might encourage the community to support tourism development, the perceived negative effects might compel them to withdraw their support for tourism development (Sharpley, 2014).

2.2. Predictors of residents' perceptions

2.2.1. Theoretical framework

SET was originally proposed by Emerson (1976) as a theory of sociology and refers to a two-sided rewarding process involving two or more social groups (Boley et al., 2014). SET has subsequently been applied to the field of tourism studies to explain the perceptions of host community residents toward tourism developments (Ap, 1992; Gursoy et al., 2002; Haobin Ye et al., 2014; Jurowski et al., 1997; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Nunkoo, Smith, & Ramkissoon, 2013; Perdue et al., 1990; Wang & Pfister, 2008). When applied to the tourism literature, SET describes a process of exchange between residents and tourists. If residents perceive the benefits of tourism to outweigh its costs, they are motivated to engage in a process of exchange and interaction with tourists (Ap, 1992; Jurowski et al., 1997). How residents evaluate these costs and benefits appears to be influenced by such factors as the potential for economic gain, the availability of tourism resources for use by the residents, their environmental attitudes, and their social values (Andereck et al., 2005; Gursoy et al., 2002; Jurowski et al., 1997; Sharpley, 2014). Therefore, if host destination residents believe that the benefits of tourism development exceed the costs of development, they are more inclined to support the development of tourism (Jurowski et al., 1997).

Nonetheless, several researchers have questioned the usefulness of SET for elucidating the factors influencing residents' perceptions (Andereck et al., 2005; Sharpley, 2014; Woosnam, Norman, & Ying, 2009). To illustrate, Sharpley (2014) explains:

"The basis of social exchange theory is that both parties engage voluntarily and proactively in the process. However, for many residents in tourism destinations, any form of interaction with tourists, may be unintentional and involuntary while, in many cases, no tangible interaction (or exchange) may occur. Moreover, almost without exception studies of residents' perceptions focus on 'variables used to predict residents' attitudes that exist within the resident or as part of a resident's identity and not the relationship that exists between resident and tourist.'" (p. 45).

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