Tourist–resident conflict: A scale development and empirical study

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ABSTRACT

Although research has investigated tourism development from the perspective of tourism impacts, few studies have explored the construct of tourist–resident conflict. This study conceptualized tourist–resident conflict and developed a scale for assessing this conflict. Furthermore, this study examined two models of antecedents and consequences of tourist–resident conflict. Through a rigorous process of instrument development, three constructs of tourist–resident conflicts were identified. The instrument was proven to have a good fit, reliability, and validity. Applying the scale of tourist–resident conflict enabled identification of the two antecedents (relative group status and intercultural competence) and three consequences (support for tourism development, travel satisfaction, and behavioral intentions) in research models. The implications of these findings for management strategies and future research directions are subsequently discussed.

1. Introduction

Tourism is a complex system that involves the following primary stakeholders (D'Angela & Go, 2009; Sheehan, Ritchie, & Hudson, 2007): tourists, local residents, local enterprises, and government departments (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2003; Yang, Ryan, & Zhang, 2013). According to social exchange theory (Ap, 1992), the attitude and level of support of stakeholders toward tourism development are influenced by the overall assessment results of actual or perceived costs and benefits (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005). Thus, when stakeholder groups share different perceptions and goals regarding tourism development, such as the difference between perceived benefits and personal interests or overall developmental costs, conflicts regarding tourism development may arise among stakeholder groups (Byrd, Bosley, & Dronberger, 2009).

In recent years, many incidents of conflict, prejudice, and discrimination have occurred between Hong Kong residents and tourists from mainland China (hereinafter referred to as Chinese tourists) (Ye, Zhang, & Yuen, 2012a). For example, Chinese tourists have been accused of violating the social norms and principles of Hong Kong culture, such as eating and making noise on the mass transit railway (MTR) and causing numerous social problems (e.g. inflating the prices of consumer goods and real estate). By contrast, some Chinese tourists have reported that they did not receive reasonable or fair treatment when they traveled to Hong Kong, and they have mainly attributed this to problems related to discrimination (Ye, Zhang, & Yuen, 2012a). On the basis of

the aforementioned studies, tourism conflicts exist that may severely influence the development of tourism and tourist destinations in the long term.

Several studies have investigated tourism impacts in terms of how the development of tourism affects tourist destinations (Poudel, Nyaupane, & Budruk, 2016; Wang & Chen, 2015). However, the concept of tourism impact differs from that of tourism conflict. Tourism impact refers to the long-term or short-term, positive or negative, and individual or accumulative influences of continual interactions between tourists and host communities on tourist destinations, local enterprises, and local communities (Moyle, Weiler, & Croy, 2013). The level of tourism impact differs according to tourist areas and is influenced by economics, social culture, ecology, psychology, and the environment. Conflict refers to individual people or groups perceiving inconsistencies or contradictions in demands or goals between them and other people or groups (Boulding, 1963). Tourist–resident conflict refers to conditions under which disagreements, negative emotions, and interference arise between tourists and residents. In addition, tourism impact is generally unilateral; that is, foreign tourists or tourism development influences local communities. In contrast, tourism conflict is bilateral, results from interactions, and is primarily reflected in variances regarding the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of tourists and local residents.

Studies have proposed several terms related to tourism conflict, such as tourism development conflict (Dredge, 2010; Engström & Boluk, 2012), social conflict (Shen, Li, Luo, & Chau, 2017; Yang et al.,

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2013), and tourism and cultural conflict (Iverson, 2010; Robinson & Boniface, 1999). However, few studies have conceptualized tourism conflict and developed a set of reliable and valid instruments for its measurement. Hence, few studies have provided answers to the following questions with regard to the dichotomous perspectives of tourists and local residents: what are the implications associated with tourist–resident conflict? What dimensions or indicators are involved in tourist–resident conflict? What are the factors that influence tourist–resident conflict? What is the effect of tourist–resident conflict on tourists or local residents?

On the basis of the aforementioned research questions and knowledge gap, this study conceptualized tourist–resident conflict and developed a scale for determining its significance, constructs, and implications. Subsequently, a theoretical framework for the antecedents and consequences of tourist–resident conflict was verified using the scale of tourist–resident conflict to compensate for the insufficient knowledge in the field of tourism research. The results can be expected to contribute to the knowledge in the field of tourism development and management, and we hope to offer suggestions for long-term tourist destination development and government policies on tourism development.

2. Literature review

2.1. Conflict

Wall and Callister (1995) indicated that conflict refers to the process by which an individual's interests oppose or are negatively influenced by other people. Barki & Hartwick (2004, p. 216) defined interpersonal conflict as "a dynamic process that occurs between interdependent parties as they experience negative emotional reactions to perceived disagreements and interference with the attainment of their goals." Several studies have regarded interpersonal relationships as a cause of conflict derived from perceived factors and factors related to the communication process (Putnam & Poole, 1987; Robbins, 1978). Moreover, some scholars have indicated that conflicts are primarily caused by cognitive and affective factors (Amason & Schweiger, 1994; Amason, 1996). Wall and Callister (1995) reviewed studies on conflict and identified the following three major sources of conflict: individual characteristics, interpersonal factors, and issues.

Regarding the perspective of organizational or group conflict, Jehn and Mannix (2001) indicated that group conflicts in organizations can be categorized into three types: relationship conflict, task conflict, and process conflict. Relationship conflict refers to the perception of interpersonal incompatibility, which involves affective conflict. Task conflict refers to a disagreement regarding a particular group task and is similar to the concept of cognitive conflict, which refers to a disagreement regarding a certain task (Amason & Sapienza, 1997). Process conflict refers to a disagreement regarding a group's approach to a task and the assignment or distribution of responsibilities and resources within a group. Group conflicts in organizations can be effectively assessed through these three dimensions. However, the context of tourism is fundamentally different from that of organizations, and the concept of group conflict in organizations may not adequately explain tourist–resident conflict.

From the perspective of recreational conflict, several studies have suggested that conflict related to goal interference or social acceptability is generated during recreational activities; thus, many scholars have indicated that recreational conflict involves two major dimensions: interpersonal conflict and social value conflict (Carothers, Vaske, & Donnelly, 2001; Vaske, Dyar, & Timmons, 2004). Interpersonal conflict occurs when a person or group of people frustrates or interferes with the efforts of another person or group to achieve a goal (Jacob & Schreyer, 1980), and social value conflict occurs between groups holding different norms and values toward a particular activity or topic (Vaske, Needham, & Cline, 2007). In contrast to interpersonal conflict,

social value conflict between groups lacks direct contact. Recreational conflict focuses on disputes between visitors and involves relatively narrower dimensions, whereas a greater number of stakeholder types are involved in tourism. Thus, the dimensions of recreational conflict also may not adequately describe tourism–resident conflicts.

By summarizing the aforementioned sources and types of conflict, we determined that organizational conflict is associated with conflict in tasks executed by groups or organization members. In addition, from the perspective of interpersonal, group, and recreational conflict, individual–individual or individual–group interaction involves interpersonal contact or communication as well as differences in personal perceptions or social values. Tourist–resident conflict that occurs during tourism development pertains to the category of interpersonal or group conflict; therefore, with interpersonal conflict and social value conflict constituting the basis of our core theory, we further developed the concept and implications of tourist–resident conflict.

2.2. Tourist–resident conflict

In the first stage of tourism development and planning, the attitudes and perceptions of all relevant stakeholders must be confirmed and understood (Kuvan & Akan, 2012) to ensure the development of mutual trust, cooperation, harmony, and interests. A stakeholder refers to any group or individual who can affect or be affected by an organization's achievements (Freeman, 1984). The level of conflict among stakeholders that is aroused by the development of tourism is extensive; thus, to effectively clarify the concept and implications of tourism conflict, we focused on tourism conflict between tourists and local residents and did not consider other stakeholders, such as the government or enterprises.

Numerous studies have investigated how local residents respond to the effects of tourism development, and various measurements and conclusions have been reported. The most well-known model is Doxey's (1975) irritation index (also known as the 'Irridex'). This four-stage index measures the progression of resident attitudes from euphoria to apathy, irritation, and antagonism in correspondence with increasing effects of tourism development on the residents' community. Doxey proposed that the irritation of residents determines the level of incompatibility between residents and tourists. In this conception, Doxey regarded each local community as a homogenous entity. However, reactions to tourism development within a community may be heterogeneous (Weaver & Opperman, 2000). A community's reaction depends on its involvement in tourism. If local residents benefit from tourism development, then they hold positive attitudes toward tourists. Murphy (1983) reported significant differences in perceptions and attitudes toward local tourism development among administrative actors, residents, and members of the business sector. When local residents believe that they can personally profit from tourism development, then they may exhibit favorable attitudes and support additional tourism development.

Several studies have used social exchange theory to explain the phenomenon of tourism development (Andereck et al., 2005; Ap, 1992). Social exchange theory primarily explains the role and interaction of a person in a group in which group goals are achieved by various members who are assigned various roles and tasks. The role that a member plays in a group is primarily determined by interpersonal exchanges between the member and other members. The operation of the interpersonal relationship system depends on the concept of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). For the domain of tourism and travel, the process of tourism development is considered a type of social exchange relationship for each stakeholder (McGehee & Andereck, 2004) because all stakeholders have their own needs and expectations; therefore, tourism development should be aimed at attaining an optimal cost–benefit balance.

McKercher, Ho, and du Cros (2005) indicated that according to conflict theory, conflicts related to tourism development are a result of