



# Urban vs. rural destinations: Residents' perceptions, community participation and support for tourism development



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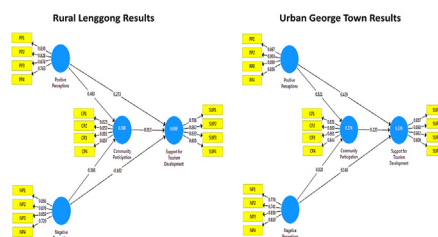
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## HIGHLIGHTS

- This study investigates the effects of residents' perceptions across urban and rural world heritage sites (WHSs).
- PLS-SEM and a number of recently developed advanced analysis methods have been used to perform the analyses.
- Different effects of residents' perceptions and participation on support for tourism development were identified.
- Different indirect effects of positive perceptions on support for tourism development were revealed.
- The results did not support any differences for other relationships across urban and rural destinations.

## GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



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## ABSTRACT

This paper investigates and compares the effects of residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism on community participation and support for tourism development across urban and rural world heritage sites (WHSs). Partial least squares – structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), has been employed to perform the analysis. The results reveal significant differences between the effects of residents' perceptions and community participation on support for tourism development in urban and rural destinations. However, the findings did not support any differences between the effects of positive perceptions on community participation, and the indirect effects of negative perceptions on support for tourism development. This study makes a significant theoretical contribution to the urban and rural tourism and residents' perceptions literature by comparing rural and urban WHSs residents. Furthermore, this study has a number of practical implications for the local authorities of rural and urban WHSs.

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## 1. Introduction

Enlisting the support and participation of the community in tourism development and the conservation of world heritage sites (WHS) is an essential prerequisite for the sustainable development of WHS destinations (Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009; Yung & Chan, 2011). In the context of WHSs, the *community* represents those residents who live within the vicinity of the WHS, and are directly affected by the site's status (Marshall, 2002). Local communities play a significant role in reviving and sustaining the WHS. Therefore, the support and participation of WHS residents in tourism development and heritage management contributes toward improving their quality of life and sustainably conserving the heritage site (Jaafar, Noor, & Rasoolimanesh, 2015a; Nicholas et al., 2009; Sirisrisak, 2009). However, WHS sustainability and residents' support of tourism development are contingent upon local residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism development on their communities (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Nicholas et al., 2009; Wang & Pfister, 2008). Previous studies have explored residents' perceptions toward tourism development in relation to the perceived positive and negative impacts of such development (Andereck et al., 2005; Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013; Sharpley, 2014; Vareiro, Remoaldo, & Cadima Ribeiro, 2013). Perceiving positive impacts as a result of tourism encourages the community to support tourism development and to participate in tourism activities; while perceiving negative impacts, on the other hand, discourages residents from supporting tourism development (Sharpley, 2014). Previous studies have explored the link between residents' perceptions, community participation, and support for tourism development using various theories, such as stakeholder theory and social exchange theory (SET) (Byrd, 2007; Easterling, 2004; Jaafar et al., 2015a; Nicholas et al., 2009; Sautter & Leisen, 1999), with SET being the dominant theory among these studies (Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Kock, & Ramayah, 2015; Sharpley, 2014). However, most of these studies have focused on rural areas and attractions near villages (Gursoy, Jurovski, & Uysal, 2002; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Sharpley, 2014). Few studies have explored residents' perceptions toward tourism development in association with their support for tourism development and community participation in urban destinations, particularly in urban WHS destinations (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Haley, Snaith, & Miller, 2005; Schofield, 2011; Sharpley, 2014).

In addition, comparative studies of the perceptions of rural and urban host residents toward the impacts of tourism development and inscription of a destination as a WHS are almost non-existent (Cui & Ryan, 2011). The impacts of tourism development and the perceptions of residents toward such development, as well as the effect of residents' perceptions on their support for and participation in the tourism development process, can differ between rural and urban contexts (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Haley et al., 2005; Schofield, 2011; Sharpley, 2014). Given the multifunctional nature of cities, tourists are attracted to urban destinations for a variety of reasons; consequently, the number of urban facilities and services used by tourists is often considerable (Ashworth & Page, 2011; Edwards, Griffin, & Hayllar, 2008). Notwithstanding, some urban facilities and services such as leisure spaces; accommodations and catering establishments; performances, festivals and events; city centers; and cultural showcases are intended specifically for use by tourists (Ashworth & Page, 2011).

Therefore, a comparison between the residents of urban and rural tourism destinations, in terms of their perceptions of tourism development, as well as the effects of these perceptions on community participation on and support for tourism development and conservation programs in WHSs, would constitute an invaluable contribution to the resident perception literature. The current

study is particularly valuable given the comparison between urban and rural WHS communities in the developing world, there being a paucity of resident perception studies (*vis-à-vis* tourism development and WHS inscription) having been conducted in the developing world (Jaafar et al., 2015a; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015; Sharpley, 2014).

Moreover, the current study compares the direct effect of positive and negative perceptions on community participation and support for tourism development, as well as the indirect effects of residents' perceptions on their support for tourism development through community participation (i.e., the mediating role of community participation between residents' perceptions and support for tourism development) across rural and urban WHS destinations. To the best of our knowledge, this is one the first studies in the tourism literature to compare both direct and indirect effects across rural and urban destinations, thus marking a unique theoretical contribution of this paper.

In addition, this research has employed partial least squares – structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2017; Lohmöller, 1989; Wold, 1982), including a number of recently developed advanced analysis techniques (see Richter, Cepeda Carrión, Roldán, and Ringle (2016) for an overview) to assess both the direct and indirect relationships in the proposed framework, and the relationships between the two groups, thus marking a significant methodological contribution of this paper to the literature.

In summation, the current study attempts to investigate the effects of residents' perceptions on their support for and participation in tourism development and conservation programs in the rural Lenggong WHS and urban George Town WHS in Malaysia using SET. This paper aims to compare these effects between urban and rural WHS destinations using a number of recently development advanced statistical analysis approaches. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: In the next section, we review the existing literature with respect residents' perceptions toward the impacts of tourism across rural and urban WHS destinations, and residents' support for tourism development and community participation. Following the literature review, we outline our research methods, and describe our methods of analysis and subsequent results, following which we undertake a discussion of our findings. We conclude this paper by identifying some of the implications of this study's findings, outline the limitations of the current study, and offer a number of suggestions for future research.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Residents' perceptions across rural and urban WHSs

The perceived impact of tourism development on local communities has been explored across several previous studies (Andereck et al., 2005; Hall & Page, 2014; Kim et al., 2013; Sharpley, 2014; Vareiro et al., 2013). Communities are directly affected by the development of tourism industries and by subsequent interactions with tourists (Sharpley, 2014). These forces can result in changes to community values, patterns of behavior, lifestyles, and community members' quality of life (Andereck et al., 2005; Hall & Page, 2014).

Tourism can influence host communities economically, socially, and environmentally. The positive economic impacts of tourism include increased household incomes, improved standards of living, the creation of more jobs and employment opportunities, and improved streams of tax revenue (Andereck et al., 2005; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Ko & Stewart, 2002). The negative economic impacts of tourism include an increase in the cost of living (Liu & Var, 1986; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015); a rise in the price of property,

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