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Measuring Resident Reactions to Community Tourism Development: A Pilot Study of a New Conceptual Framework

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study are two-fold: 1) to propose an alternative framework for understanding resident reactions toward community tourism through the integration of two theories, The Reasoned Action and Social Exchange Theory; and 2) to reveal the relationships between the key concepts in the framework, that is, beliefs, attitude, subjective norm, intention, support, personal factors, and marketing stimuli. This study represents an addition to the existing literature in community tourism and can benefit scholars, business analysts, and decision makers by clarifying the underlying theoretical concepts that explain what residents' perceptions are toward tourism and how they can be measured.

Key Words: community tourism, resident attitudes, resident reactions, tourism development

INTRODUCTION

Since the late 1980s, tourism researchers have paid much attention to understanding residents' reactions to tourism development in a community. This focus corresponds to a new trend emerging in the U.S. market, where more and more cities and regions have begun to consider tourism as an important means to boost the local economy (Anderick & Vogt, 2000). The success of tourism development in a community is the result of many factors. One of which was identified by both scholars and practitioners is resident reactions (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). The lives of local residents can be greatly influenced by tourism development while at the same time their attitudes and behavior can greatly influence the satisfaction and overall experience of tourists in the community; they are, therefore, vital to the success of community tourism.

Two patterns of research can be identified from previous studies on local resident reactions to community tourism developments. Early studies, published in the late 1980s and early 1990s, showed a pattern of "tourism impact" (Anderick et al, 2000). Most of these studies focused on understanding the perceived impact of tourism by residents on a local community and their lives. As Ap (1990) contended, most of these early studies were exploratory in nature and primarily descriptive. Ap also called for theoretical orientation and operational definitions of the central concepts in understanding resident reactions to tourism. More recent studies, published in the past decade, have demonstrated a broader approach. Andriotis and Vaughan (2003) summarized that the theories adopted by previous research include CAC (cognitive, affective, and behavioral components of attitudes), play theory, compensation theory, conflict theory, dependency theory, social exchange theory, and social representation theory. Among these, the social exchange theory (SET) has been most frequently applied.

The appropriateness of SET as a theoretical framework for understanding resident reactions to tourism development was mentioned by Perdue, Long, and Allen (1990) and later elaborated on by Ap (1992). However, a review of this research literature suggests that the limits inherent in SET have prevented a complete understanding of resident reactions to tourism development. Although SET partially explains why residents either support or do not support tourism, it does not clarify the definitions and relationships between the key theoretical concepts, nor does it provide operational measures for these key concepts. Therefore, this study proposes an alternative approach for understanding resident reactions to community tourism development. The objectives of this study are two-fold: 1) to propose an alternative framework for understanding resident reactions toward community tourism; and 2) to reveal and test the relationships between the key concepts in the framework, that is, beliefs, attitude, subjective

norm, intention, support, personal factors, and marketing stimuli. This study may benefit scholars, business analysts, and decision makers by clarifying the underlying theoretical concepts that explain what residents' perceptions are toward tourism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The proposed framework (Figure 1) for this study involves the integration of Social Exchange Theory (SET) with the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA).

Social exchange theory (SET) examines the exchange of rewards and costs to quantify the values of outcomes from different situations for an individual or a group (Thibault & Kelley, 1952). The theory suggests that people strive to minimize costs and maximize rewards. Their likelihood of developing a relationship with someone or an organization is based on perceived possible outcomes; when they perceived outcomes to be positive (i.e., rewards exceed costs), they will disclose more information and develop a relationship with that person or organization. Applying this theory to tourism, Ap (1992) stated that SET was an appropriate theoretical framework to explain why and under what situations local residents have positive attitudes toward tourism and support tourism. Ap's view gained much acceptance in later studies.

However, a close examination of the literature reveals conflicting findings in studies that have applied SET. For instance, Andereck et al. (2000) found "a positive relationship between perceived negative impact of tourism and resident support for its development" (p. 35), a finding that obviously contradicts the essence of SET, which holds that only "rewards" or "perceived positive outcomes" lead to the formation of a relationship between individuals or groups (i.e., support for tourism). A further examination of the literature reveals that many authors appear to have different interpretations of the central theoretical concepts tested in their studies, which include resident perceptions toward tourism, resident attitudes toward tourism, and resident support for tourism (these concepts will be noted as "perceptions," "attitudes," and "support" in the following text). It is evident that many authors have used the two terms "attitude" and "perception" interchangeably. However, as Ap (1992) pointed out, there is a fine distinction in meaning between these two terms. In the study of consumer behavior, "perceptions toward tourism" implies a resident's knowledge of or beliefs toward tourism, that is, a resident's cognitive responses to marketplace stimuli. Meanwhile, "attitude" is an emotive component in a resident's responses to marketplace stimuli and describes a person's relatively consistent evaluations, feelings, and tendencies toward an object or idea. Failing to recognize the difference between "perception" and "attitude" has contributed to the contradictory findings in previous studies.

Only a few of the early studies that were published before Ap's (1992) article looked at the relationship between resident attitudes and support for tourism development; most of them assumed an automatic relationship between positive attitude and support, that is, positive attitude implied support. More recent studies, especially those published after Ap's (1992) rationalization of SET, have tested the relationship between attitude or perceptions and support. However, different authors apparently have different interpretations of the concept of "support," as reflected in different scales used to measure it. For instance, King, Pizam, and Milman (1993) used "overall opinion about tourism" (oppose vs. favor) to measure "support."

How a resident's support for tourism should be measured resides in the clarification of its definition. In Merriam Webster (www.m-w.com), "support" is defined as follows: (a) to endure quietly or bravely, (b) to promote the interests or causes of, or to defend as valid, or to advocate, (c) to bid in bridge, or, to provide with substantiation, and (d) to hold up or serve as a foundation. Apparently, SET is not sufficient to account for some conflicting and confusing findings in the existing studies. This calls for an alternative approach that can offer clear definitions for the theoretical concepts as well as identify the relationships among them. SET and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) together can accomplish this task.

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) was advanced by sociologists Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) and is accepted in many fields. It consists of four main components: beliefs, attitudes, intention, and behavior. The authors contended that a person's behavior is determined by his or her intention to perform the behavior and that this intention is, in turn, a function of this individual's attitude toward the behavior and his or her subjective norm. This person's attitude, moreover, is an index of the degree to which the person likes or dislikes an object, where "object" is used in the generic sense to refer to any aspect of the individual's world; therefore, a person's attitude toward a

behavior is determined by the set of salient beliefs he or she holds about performing the behavior. Salient beliefs, according to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), are a small number of beliefs that have significant influence on attitude. “Subjective norm” is defined as a person’s perception that most people who are important to her or him think that she or he should or should not perform the behavior in question.

According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), intentions are the probability, as rated by the subject, that he or she will perform the behavior. An individual’s behavioral intention is the most immediate factor influencing his or her behavior. This intention is a function of the individual’s attitude and subjective norm. These authors also stated that variables not included in their model could affect intention and, consequently, behavior. However, these variables must first significantly affect the normative belief component and their weights (i.e., salient belief and attitude). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) defined behavior as the transmission of intention into action, which can be influenced by many factors such as time, place, and methods used to take an action.

Apparently, TRA clarifies not only the definitions of “perceptions” (beliefs), “attitudes” and “support,” but also the relationships among these concepts. From the perspective of consumer behavior, TRA covers all consumer responses that marketers like to observe when launching a new product or marketing campaign: consumers’ cognitive responses (beliefs or knowledge), affective responses (attitudes), and behavioral responses (intention to engage in an exchange relationship, and engaging in an exchange relationship).

An Alternative Framework for Understanding Resident Reactions

The preceding discussions are illustrated in Figure 1, which displays the central concepts of SET and TRA as applied to community tourism and their relationships. From right to left, this model portrays the following relationships: (a) residents’ support for tourism development is a result of their intention to support it, the transferring process of which can be influenced by moderator variables such as time (when to support), place (where to support), method (how to support), and others; (b) residents’ intention to support or not is a result of their overall attitude toward tourism as well as a person’s subjective norm, and this process might be influenced by previous experience or an alternative object that can create more positive outcomes; (c) residents’ attitude is a function of all the salient beliefs (i.e., benefits and costs) about the impact of tourism; and finally (d) a person’s salient beliefs are formed through marketing information (including source, type, and amount) and personal factors such as attachment to the community, age, gender, education, income, and occupation (related to tourism or not).

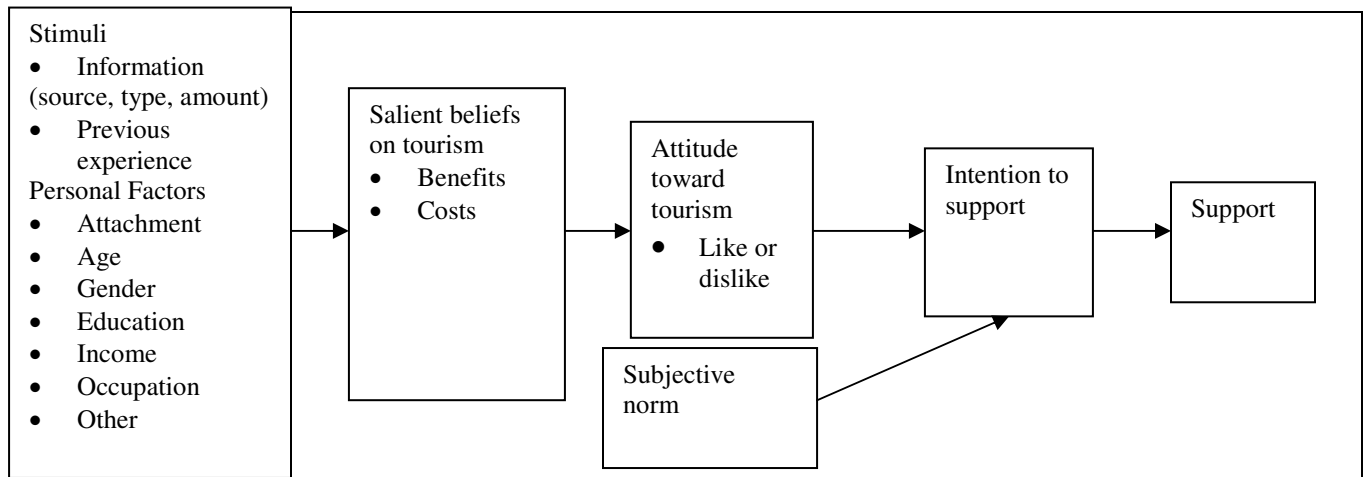


Figure 1: An Alternative Framework for Understanding Resident Reactions toward Community Tourism

Evidently, TRA contributes to the overall flow of the framework and SET mainly explains the salient beliefs, which in fact are positive and negative aspects of tourism. In tourism research, researchers have repeatedly identified these “positive aspects of tourism” as “benefits and opportunities,” and “negative aspects of tourism” as “costs and concerns.” This study derived and tested the following hypotheses:

H1: Perceived benefits created by tourism development significantly influence a person’s attitude toward it.
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H2: Perceived costs created by tourism significantly influence a person's attitude toward it.

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H3: Perceived benefits and costs toward community tourism are significantly influenced by personal factors and marketing stimuli.

H4: A person's intention to support tourism can be predicted by this person's attitude toward tourism development and subjective norm.

METHODOLOGY

Five salient beliefs about the positive effects of tourism were adapted from previous studies (e.g., Ap, 1992; Andereck, et al. 2000; Deccio, et al. 2002), including employment opportunities, shopping opportunities, revenue for local government, increased household income, and recreational opportunities. In addition, six salient beliefs about the negative effects of tourism were also obtained from previous research (e.g., Ap, 1992; Andereck, et al. 2000; Deccio, et al. 2002), including traffic congestion, increased crime, damage to natural environment, expensive land and housing, expensive products and services, and negative impact on the local culture. A universal questionnaire item was used to measure participants' overall evaluation of tourism, i.e. the difference between benefits and costs and a single item was adapted from McGehee, et al. (2004) to measure perceived personal gain from community tourism developments.

A resident's overall attitude toward tourism development in X city was measured on a 7-point Likert measurement scale where "1" refers to "don't like it at all" and "7" refers to "like it very much." Variables that may contribute to the formation of salient beliefs toward community tourism included: resident's attachment to the community, familiarity with the marketing campaign, and major socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, education, household income, and occupation (i.e., whether or not a person's job is tourism-related).

This study also used two measures to test the ultimate outcomes of residents' attitude toward tourism: 1) actual and potential support (intention) toward tourism; and 2) no intention to support it in the future. The data were collected in X city located in New England. A database provided by a local power company served as framework from which the sample for this study was derived. All surveys were mailed through the U.S. postal service. A total of 450 responses were received. After eliminating invalid surveys, 149 responses were retained for data analysis, which resulted in an actual response rate of 15%.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data was used to conduct a descriptive analysis. The respondents' gender was almost equally distributed (47% male and 53% female). Age was distributed as follows: approximately 22% of the respondents were between 18 and 34, 21% between 35 and 44, 24% between 45 and 55, and 33% aged of 55 or older. With respect to education, approximately 54% of the respondents had at least a college degree. Only 8% of the respondents had jobs related to tourism and approximately 52% of the respondents reported a total household income that was higher than \$59,999. Approximately 60% had lived in the current community for more than nine years and a majority of them, 86%, were familiar with the logo in the marketing campaign for tourism development in the community. Also, most of them (about 85%) expressed deep concern about the future of their community. More than 62% of the respondents thought that tourism development in "X" city created more benefits than problems, but only 42% of them thought that their families directly benefited from it. A majority of the respondents, about 73%, liked the idea of developing tourism in "X" city, among which more than half liked the idea very much. One third of the respondents expressed that they had done something concrete to support tourism; another one third expressed that they would do something to support tourism in the future, with the rest expressing that they would not do anything to support tourism in "X" city. Half of the respondents ranked tourism as the third most important industry in "X" city, which reflected the reality. An overwhelming majority of the respondents (80%) said that they considered other people's opinions when making an important decision, which was used to measure a person's subjective norm.

Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was performed with the 11 salient beliefs on tourism development in "X" city. Principle Component Analysis (PCA) was the extraction method. The appropriateness of the PCA with the given data was assessed before analyzing the factor loading weights based on the significance of the overall correlation matrix and the significance of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO). The results revealed that a factor analysis

was appropriate with the data ($KMO = .76$). The significance of the overall correlation matrix was evaluated by the Barlett test of sphericity, which was significant at the .001 level, indicating that the data was suitable for factor analysis. The number of factors was determined based on the Eigenvalue and size of each variable's factor loading scores (a cutoff point of 0.45 was used for item inclusion). As shown in Table 1, the rotation procedures of varimax with Kaiser Normalization produced 3 factors that explained approximately 68% of total variance, which is an acceptable range (Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black, 1998). The solution confirmed the findings in previous studies: the five items identified in the literature as reflecting people's perceived benefits and opportunities produced by tourism were highly correlated, and the five out of six items reflecting the negative effects of tourism were grouped together. One single item reflecting the impact of tourism on the local culture formed the third component alone.

Table 1: Solutions of PCA for Salient Beliefs on Community Tourism

Factor	No. of Items	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
General Benefits	5	3.7	34	0.89
Costs	5	2.7	25	0.80
Cultural Impact	1	1.0	9	0.78
Total	11		68	

The factor analysis solution showed a good “match” between the theoretical structure. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha values for the multi-item factors were above 0.70, showing that these measures were reliable (Hair et. al., 1998).

Multiple Regression Analysis

Next, several multiple regression models were estimated to test the hypotheses. The effects of salient beliefs on attitude were examined first. In this process, the dependent variable was identified as “attitude” and independent variables as “General Benefits,” “Costs,” “Cultural Impact,” and “Personal Gain.” “General Benefits,” “Costs” and “Cultural Impact” were surrogates for three factors obtained in the factor analysis. The independent variable “Personal Gain” were responses obtained from a questionnaire item. The other independent variables included concern about the community, attachment, familiarity with the campaign logo, personal gain from tourism, age, gender, income, education and job. All the categorical variables except gender were converted into dichotomous variables by splitting each one into two groups with relatively equal numbers of cases. All cases were then coded with dummy coding. The data was tested for the assumption of regression analysis and all the variables could be included in the regression analysis.

The results of performing a stepwise multiple regression analysis are shown below in a regression function equation (Equation 1). “Attitude” was first regressed on four independent variables, “General Benefits,” “Costs,” “Personal Gain,” and “Cultural Impact.” Three independent variables, “General Benefits,” “Costs and “Personal Gain,” significantly predicted residents' attitudes, ($p < 0.000$). All the coefficients shown were standardized beta values. According to individual t-tests, factor 1, “General Benefits”, had a statistical significant and positive relationship with residents' attitude towards tourism development, $t = 3.6, p < 0.001$. Factor 2, “Costs” negatively affected significantly residents overall attitude, $t = 2.4, p < 0.05$. Finally, the “Personal Gain” item, also displayed a statistical significant and positive relationship with residents' attitude to tourism development, $t = 2.9, p < 0.001$. Therefore, it can be suggested that hypotheses 1 and 2 can be accepted.

The multiple regression analysis estimating “Attitude” revealed the following model:

$$\text{Equation 1: Attitude} = 0.534 \text{ General Benefits} - 0.167 \text{ costs} + 0.190 \text{ Personal Gain.}$$

Next, a series of simple regressions were conducted to test the impact of marketing stimuli and personal factors on residents' salient beliefs about tourism (hypothesis 3). Only three independent variables, “Attachment,” Education “ and “Occupation” showed statistically significant impacts ($p < 0.000$) on “General Benefits,” “Costs and “Personal Gain,” respectively (equations 2 – 4). All the coefficients shown were standardized beta values. According to individual t-tests, “Attachment” had a statistical significant and positive relationship with what residents perceived as “General Benefit” ($t = 2.6, p < 0.05$). On the other hand, “Education” had a significant

negative relationship on “Costs” ($t = 3.6, p < 0.001$). In addition, residents’ occupations had a significant positive relationship with the variable “Personal Gain” ($t = 3.4, p < 0.001$). Consequently, hypotheses 3 can be accepted only in regard to some personal factors influencing residents’ salient beliefs about the perceived benefits and costs of tourism.

Equation 2: General Benefits = 0.171 Attachment.

Equation 3: Costs = - 0.22 Education

Equation 4: Personal Gain = 0.201 Occupation.

Logistic Regression

Additionally, hypothesis 4 was investigated, which tested the relationships between residents’ intention to support tourism development and their attitudes about tourism and the influence of subjective norms. To investigate whether a person’s attitude can predict a person’s intention to or not to support tourism development, logistic regression analysis was applied. The dependent variable “Intention” was established by utilizing a dummy coding method, which used “0” for “no intention to support” and “1” for “actual and potential support.” The variables “Attitude” and “Subjective Norm” served as independent variables. However, the variable “Subjective Norm” could not be used in the analysis since preliminary testing revealed that the necessary assumptions for the analysis were violated. Nevertheless, the descriptive analysis revealed that 80 percent of residents indicated that the opinion of people important to them significantly influenced their decisions. In addition, the relationship between residents’ attitudes and their intentions to support tourism was found to be statistically significant. Equation 5 shows the statistics obtained for the logistic regression between “Attitude” and “Intention.” It can be concluded that hypotheses 4 can be partially accepted, limiting this assumption to the impact of residents’ attitudes on their intentions to support tourism.

Equation 5: Probability (intention) = $\text{Exp}(0.336X) / 1 + \text{Exp}(0.336X)$.

Where: Intention: the likelihood of a person to support or not support tourism in the future; X: a person’s attitude toward tourism development in the community.

Attitude was found to have a positive influence on the model based on the Wald Statistic. The probability for a person to support tourism is 39.9% higher when the rating of this person’s attitude toward tourism increases by one unit. The overall accuracy of the model is 71.1%. The goodness of fit test, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test, indicates that the model has a good fit (chi-square = 0.278, df = 3, $p < 0.05$). The chi-square test of the model’s importance showed that all of the parameters in the model have significant effects on the outcome measured, which is intention to support.

The predicted probabilities of intention were sorted by “attitude,” which was rated on a seven-point scale. The results show that people with a very positive attitude, rating a score of 7, are most likely to support tourism in the community, with a probability of 80.15%. On the other hand, respondents rating 5 and 6 had a probability of 74.27% and 67.36% to support tourism, respectively. Respondents providing a score of 4 had a probability of 59.60% to support tourism and those giving a rating of 3 had a probability of 51.3% to support tourism. Finally, residents rating 1 and 2 had a probability of lower than 43% to support tourism in their community.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A hypothesized model was tested in this pilot study. The results revealed acceptance of hypotheses 1 and 2, which tested whether attitude towards tourism developments is influenced significantly by community residents’ perceptions of general and personal benefits received from tourism, and also tourism development’s perceived costs. The results revealed that perceived general and personal benefits of tourism development increased positive attitudes of local residents, which is not a surprising result. However, the regression estimate showed that residents’ positive attitudes toward tourism developments increased almost three times more when the benefit perceived was of a general nature for the community in contrast to the estimate that measured personal benefits alone. This outcome provides the suggestion for community leaders who wish to develop tourism that they may win public approval by emphasizing the general advantages of such projects. Furthermore, the estimate also suggests that personal gains, such as employment opportunities for locals, are much less attractive to residents than benefits for the entire

community. The reasons for this phenomenon may be that the overall economic conditions of the community investigated were good. The descriptive analyses showed that approximately 52% of the respondents reported a total household income of higher than \$59,999. Furthermore, Equation 1 also showed that residents cared more about negative impacts of tourism on their community than they did about their own personal gain, which demonstrates that residents worry about their communities and tourism cannot be promoted to them by simply highlighting their own personal gains. Finally, the results provide an extension to the existing literature of Social Exchange Theory, as residents in this community did not simply strive to maximize their benefits but differentiated between personal and community benefits.

Hypothesis 3 tested the impact of personal factors and marketing stimuli on community residents' perceived benefits from tourism and its perceived costs. The results demonstrated that marketing stimuli had no significant impact on residents' perceptions, which is an important finding because it suggests that this community has to re-evaluate the dissemination of marketing information processes and how to use resources more effectively. Therefore, the part of hypothesis 3 that tested for the impact of the marketing stimuli can be rejected. On the other hand, hypotheses 3 can be accepted in regard to three personal factors - a person's attachment to the community, residents' education levels and whether respondents had tourism related employment. Equation 2 revealed a significant relationship between residents' attachment to the community and their realization of tourism's general benefits. Since the community tested was not very transient, the creation of benefits for the overall community was a crucial factor for tourism development acceptance. In addition, Equation 3 suggested that when residents' education levels increased, they were less concerned with the perceived costs of tourism developments, which implied that marketing resources should really be used to educate residents with lower education levels about the costs of tourism. Finally, Equation 4 tested the relationship of respondents' tourism employment and the perception of receiving a personal advantage from tourism development, which was not surprisingly significant. Residents who have tourism related employment feel that they personally benefit from tourism developments. These residents should be considered for tourism promoting campaigns.

The findings generated by the logistic regression analysis (Equation 5) basically confirmed assumptions revealed in previous literature (Ap, 1992) that a relationship exists between a positive attitude about tourism and support for tourism. However, this study found that this relationship is not linear. This study shows that even if residents have a negative attitude, they still support tourism. For example, the predicted probability analysis reveals that when residents ranked their support for tourism very low (scale items of 1 or 2 on a scale of 1-7), they nevertheless showed a 35% to 43% probability that they would support tourism, respectively. This finding represents an addition to the existing literature (Purdue, Long and Allen, 1990). On the other hand, this research also demonstrates that residents who ranked their support as very high (7 on a 1-7 scale), nevertheless only supported tourism 80% of the time, which means that even if a person has a very good attitude toward tourism, there is still a 20% chance that they will not support tourism. This is an important finding, because it allows community leaders to study probability levels of support if they have to choose between two different industries as alternatives for development in their communities.

In addition, different levels of support can be addressed in promotional efforts. Since even people with dissonance are still willing to support tourism at a certain level, this study shows opportunities for tourism developers that could not be discovered otherwise. Given that it takes time to realize the benefits from tourism developments communities can use analysis such as the one applied in this study to highlight potential benefits, investigate negative notion and emphasize positive attitudes. Limitations of this study include a relative small sample size. Future studies should address these limitations and also apply more sophisticated statistical methods, such as path analysis.

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