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Support for Tourism: Pursuing a Better Life and Social Justice

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Support for Tourism: Pursuing a Better Life and Social Justice

Introduction

An increasing number of stories about the way the local people feel and how they are treated unfairly in tourism development is being reported (e.g. Rastegar 2020; Wang and Yotsumoto 2019). A failure to detect and deal with the unfairness perceived by individuals has been found to lead to different adverse outcomes including negative attitude and behavior (e.g. Adams 1965), poor physical health, and lower level of sense of wellbeing (e.g. Elovainio et al. 2004), weak community identification (e.g. Su, Huang and Nejati 2019) to name a few. Nonetheless, despite the growing importance of perceived justice in both practice and academic research, little attention has been paid to its application in the destination context (Su, Huang and Nejati 2019).

Over the last few decades, residents' attitudes or behaviors toward tourism development have attracted considerable attention bringing a significant amount of research on this topic (e.g. Joo et al. 2018; Woo, Kim and Uysal 2015). The majority of the existing literature on community support for tourism have adopted Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Sharpley 2014). From this perspective, most literature on residents' support for tourism suggests that residents first recognize gains and losses brought by tourism, and then determine to express support for or oppose to tourism development depending on whether the benefits outweigh the costs. Nonetheless, residents' behavioral responses to tourism may depend on non-economic domains including political, social, and psychological factors (Boley et al. 2014; Woosnam 2012). Considering this, researchers have called for novel inquiries regarding the predictors of residents' support for tourism, applying theories other than SET (Ouyang, Gursoy and Sharma 2017; Woosnam 2012). Accordingly, to contribute to this growing body of knowledge, this study aims to examine residents' support for tourism development based on organizational justice theory. Moreover, the effect of residents' perceived justice on the support for tourism development may vary across certain factors. Thus, we employ Weber's theory of formal and substantive rationality to test the moderating role of economic factors (i.e. personal economic benefits) with respect to the effects of non-economic constructs (i.e. perceived justice) on residents' support for tourism.

The conceptual model posits quality of life (QOL) as a mediator of residents' perceived justice effect on their support for tourism, and personal economic benefits as a moderator between them. This study might be one of the first studies centering on applying justice theory to destination contexts, with attention to residents' QOL and their support for tourism. Moreover, the framework combining residents' formal (economic) and substantive (non-economic) considerations breaks new ground for examining residents' QOL and supportive behavior for tourism. The findings offer significant theoretical and practical implications for destination managers, tourism authorities and companies running tourism.

Literature Review

The matters of fairness and justice have received considerable attention following the conceptualization of equity theory in the early 1960s (Greenberg 1987). The equity theory has been widely employed in various fields, such as geography (e.g. Blyth 2020), city management (e.g. Kronenberg et al. 2020), and service recovery (e.g. Cohen-Charash and Spector 2001). The extant literature relating to organizational behavior confirms that justice consists of three inextricably linked but distinct dimensions: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. The distributive justice focuses on how individuals respond to unfair distribution of outcomes (rewards) and resources. Procedural justice refers to the fair perceptions of the processes by which outcomes are achieved. Finally, the interactional justice signifies the extent to which authorities or managers treat subordinates or employees politely, honestly and respectfully in implementing procedures (Greenberg 1987). Despite its wide adaptation in organizational behavior research, the application of justice theory in tourism destination context is scarce. Buhalis (2003) argued that tourism destinations consist of

different services, products and experiences provided for tourists by the host (Buhalis 2000), hence, in essence, they could be regarded as complex organizations (Buhalis 2003). While the residents, just like the employees in an organization, play a significant role affecting the success or failure of the tourism industry in the destinations (Ap 1992). Tourism destinations go through different phases of development which are characterized by both tangible (e.g. new infrastructure) and intangible (e.g. residents' behavioral responses) consequences. The structural changes that the destinations experience as a result of tourism development may invoke certain fairness perceptions among residents. Examining these effects is essential for managerial decisions for destination management and marketing organizations. Organizational justice theory suggests that employees' psychological and behavioral outcomes are the function of their perceptions of being treated fairly in organizations (Blyth 2020). The previous research demonstrates that lack of perceived justice has a negative influence on an individual's health in relation to QOL, as it results in negative emotions including anger, sadness, fear, depression and anxiety (Colquitt et al. 2012; Elovainio et al. 2011). On a contrary, when people feel that environment is fair to them, they tend to generate more positive psychology, which suggests that perceptions of justice are significant factors predicting psychological wellbeing (Bègue and Bastounis 2003; Blyth 2020). Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 1. Residents' perceived justice (H1a distributive justice, H2a procedural justice, and H3c interactional justice) has a positive effect on their quality of life.

When people perceive they are treated unfairly in an organization, they tend to generate negative behaviors (Adams 1965). In a similar manner, employees show positive behaviors such as positive word-of-mouth, and re-patronage intentions if they perceive to be treated justly (Namkung and Jang 2009). Cohen-Charash and Spector's (2001) research findings highlight that employees are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors which contribute to an organization's further development, if they perceive justice and respect in their workplace. In addition, the study in Mexico City suggests that citizens' perceptions of distributive and procedural justice of smoke-free laws can contribute to elucidate their support for the law (Thrasher, Besley and González 2010). As delineated before, residents in destinations naturally have many interactions with tourists and participate in providing products and services. Thus, they act just like the employees in an organization. Moreover, the tourism development processes in the destinations are monitored by governmental departments, destination management and marketing organizations, that in a way function as managers of the destination. For instance, in China's rural destinations, governments play the dominant roles in developing communities for tourists. Thus, the government officers are actively engaged in supervising the tourism development. Hence, the relationship between villagers and governments is just like the one between employees and their organizations. Therefore, these arguments support the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Residents' perceived justice (H2a distributive justice, H2b procedural justice, and H2c interactional justice) has a positive effect on their support for tourism.

Some previous works has supported the link between residents' QOL and their supportive behaviors. Uysal et al. (2012) investigated the effect of tourism development on communities and suggested that residents' perception of local living conditions influenced by tourism has an effect on their overall life satisfaction. Moreover, the study further pointed out that residents were more likely to take a negative attitude toward future tourism development if tourism decreased their wellbeing. Recently, Ouyang, Gursoy and Chen (2019) highlighted that residents' overall QOL perceptions impacted their supportive behaviors towards the sport event. In addition, they confirmed that QOL's effects on locals' attitudes towards tourism increased overtime. Given the above arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Residents' quality of life has a positive effect on their support for tourism.

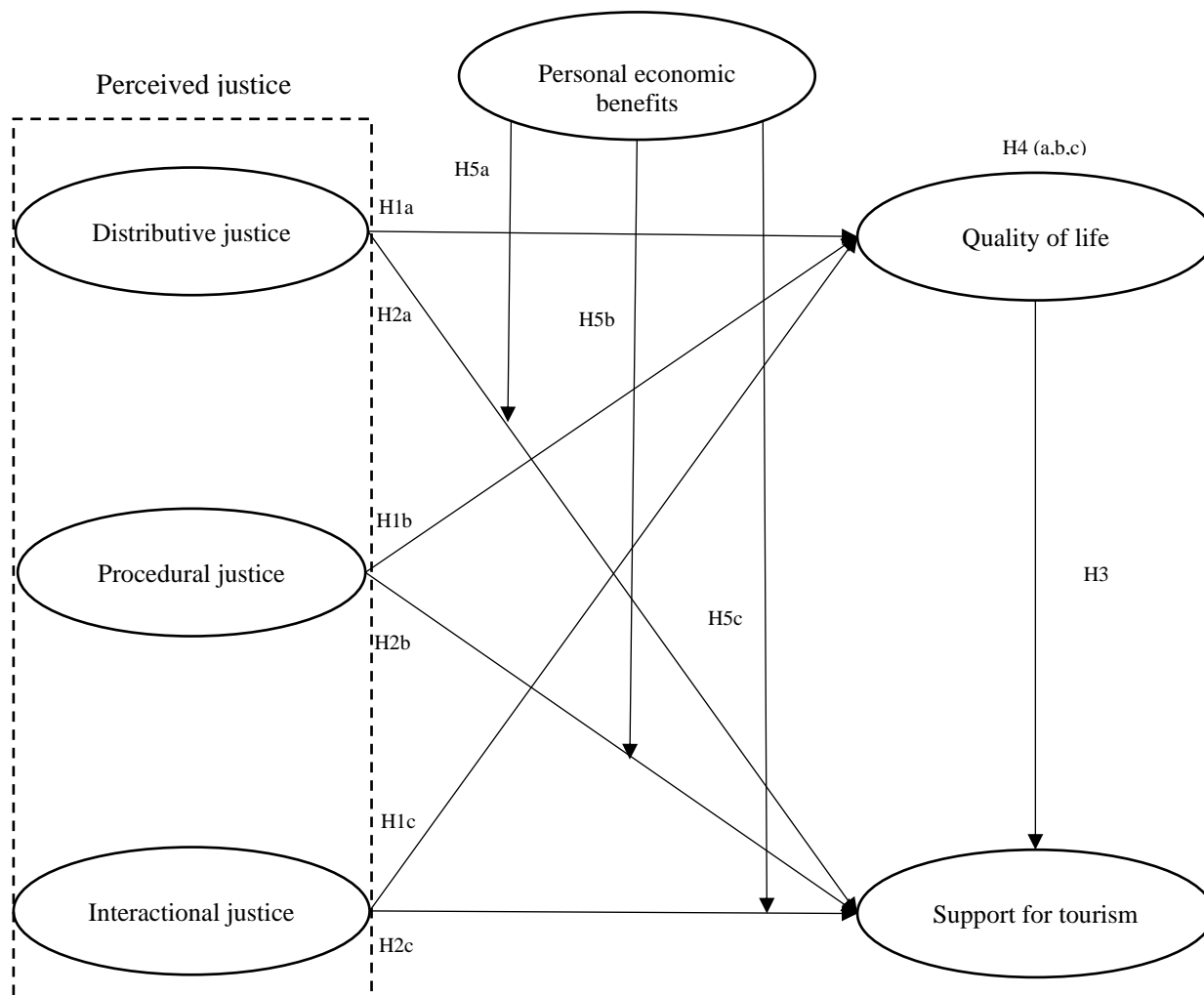
Furthermore, as mentioned, there is likely to be a positive relationship between residents' perceived justice and their QOL. Hence, it was hypothesized:

H4. Residents' quality of life mediates the relationship between their perceived justice (H4a distributive justice, H4b procedural justice, and H4c interactional justice) and support for tourism.

Rationality theory developed by the sociologist Max Weber suggests that individuals' motivation of participating in some economic activities is determined by both formal and substantive rationality (Kalberg 1980). Formal rationality, consisting of means-end and rational actions, concentrates on economic actions while substantive rationality focuses on non-economic motivations, such as values, philosophy, and psychological factors (Kalberg 1980). Therefore, when residents decide to support tourism or not based on their justice perceptions (substantive rationality), they also consider the personal economic benefits of tourism on the basis of their formal rationality. Thus:

H5. Residents' personal economic benefits from tourism has a moderating effect on the positive relationship between their perceived justice (H5a distributive justice, H5b procedural justice, and H5c interactional justice) and support for tourism. Specifically, the effect of residents' perceived justice on their support for tourism is likely to be amplified under high rather than low values of personal economic benefits. The hypothesized relationships are presented in proposed theoretical framework (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Proposed theoretical framework



Methodology

Rural tourism is regarded as one of the most effective engines to boost rural prosperity and economic recovery (Bosworth and Farrell 2011). In China, rural tourism has emerged in the 1980s, initially in the form of Nongjiale. The Nongjiale is a common rural tourism product, which provides local food, home-stay accommodation and countryside entertainments at the villagers' homes (Su 2011). At present, Chinese government calls for more substantial efforts in developing tourism in rural areas to enhance farmers' wellbeing. Previous research demonstrates that there are certain conflict issues relating to rural tourism development in China, including arguments between residents and village officials regarding monitoring and management and unjust revenue distribution (Wang and Yotsumoto 2019). Thus, to ensure sustainable rural tourism development, it is crucial to analyze residents' perceived unfairness of this process.

Considering the unique characteristics of each rural destination and differences in tourism development levels the data was collected from residents of two villages, namely Jingtang and Taokezi in Shandong province in eastern China. Both villages have adopted the government-led development model in cultivating tourism, suggesting possible transformations in villagers' perceived fairness of tourism development when facing government officials and companies running rural tourism. The data was collected via a self-administrated questionnaire from the residents living in Jingtang and Taokezi. Before conducting the formal survey, a pre-test based on a convenient sampling was run on 70 villagers to ensure the reliability and validity of the survey instrument. A total of 510 respondents were intercepted at the entrance of the villages according to a systematic random sampling with a random start. The questionnaires were gathered over a five-week period, from July to August, 2017, and a total of 472 were completed. 60 invalid questionnaires were excluded, and the remaining 412 questionnaires (138 from Taokezi, 274 from Jingtang) were included in the analysis.

The data collection instrument consisted of two parts. Part 1 focused on residents' perception of personal economic benefits from tourism, and justice in tourism including distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice, support for tourism and quality of life. All measures applied were adapted from existing validated scales. Part 2 was dedicated to respondents' socio-demographic characteristics.

Results

Before performing hypotheses testing, we checked whether the study was subject to common method bias (CMB). Harman's one-factor test was employed as a post-hoc procedure. The test was run using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to identify whether the majority of variance can be explained by a single factor. The generated factor explained 31.12% of the total variance, less than the 50% threshold, indicating that there is no CMB (Podsakoff et al. 2003). We then performed a confirmatory factor analysis to assess the fit of the measurement model. The model displayed a good fit ($\chi^2=371.902$, $\chi^2/df=1.19$, $p<0.01$, GFI= 0.94, AGFI= 0.92, CFI= 0.99, TLI=0.99, SRMR= 0.04, RMSEA= 0.02) given all the fit indices have exceeded the fit criteria recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999). Furthermore, we tested the construct validity and reliability in the measurement model. The composite reliability (CR) of all constructs in the study exceeded the recommended value of 0.7 (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Similarly, the values of average extracted variance (AVE) were greater than the acceptable threshold of 0.5 (Fornell and

Larcker 1981). Thus, the convergent validity was established. The squared root of AVE for each construct exceeded the inter-construct correlations, indicating the discriminant validity.

Following the CFA, the hypothesized relationships were tested using structural equation modelling (SEM) via IBM AMOS. The individual paths were further examined, and the summary of the hypothesized links is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesized paths	β	t	Supported?
H1a: Distributive justice \rightarrow QOL	.250	4.529***	Yes
H1b: Procedural justice \rightarrow QOL	.206	3.653***	Yes
H1c: Interactional justice \rightarrow QOL	.331	5.911***	Yes
H2a: Distributive justice \rightarrow Support for tourism	.144	2.293*	Yes
H2b: Procedural justice \rightarrow Support for tourism	.127	2.044*	Yes
H2c: Interactional justice \rightarrow Support for tourism	.130	2.066*	Yes
H3: QOL \rightarrow Support for tourism	.205	3.085**	Yes

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < .05$

The findings indicated that all three dimensions of perceived justice, namely distributive justice ($\beta=0.250$), procedural justice ($\beta=0.206$), and interactional justice ($\beta=0.331$) have significant positive effects on residents' quality of life. Thus, hypotheses H1a, H1b and H1c were fully supported. Similarly, the results demonstrated that distributive justice ($\beta=0.144$), procedural justice ($\beta=0.127$), and interactional justice ($\beta=0.130$) positively and significantly affect residents' support for tourism development, hence supporting hypotheses H2a-H2c. Finally, hypothesis H3 was supported, indicating that residents' quality of life positively affects locals' support for tourism development ($\beta=0.205$). The hypothesized links between three dimensions of perceived justice and support for tourism development via residents' quality of life were tested further. The bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples was selected to estimate the significance of indirect effects (Zhao et al. 2010; Preacher and Hayes, 2008). The indirect effects of three dimensions of perceived justice on support for tourism were confirmed to be mediated by residents' quality of life. Thus, supporting hypotheses H4a-H4c. Specifically, the effects of distributive justice (H4a) ($\beta = 0.051$, SE = 0.022, CI [0.017, 0.103]), procedural justice (H4b) ($\beta = 0.042$, SE = 0.018, CI [0.014, 0.103]) and interactional justice (H4c) ($\beta = 0.068$, SE = 0.026, CI [0.024, 0.129]) on support for tourism is mediated by residents' quality of life. We further tested the moderation effect of personal economic benefits on the paths from three dimensions of perceived justice to residents' support for tourism development through quality of life. The moderation effect on the link between the distributive justice (H5a) ($\beta = 0.2367$, SE = 0.0447, CI [0.1487, 0.3246]), procedural justice (H5b) ($\beta = 0.2728$, SE = 0.0468, CI [0.1807, 0.3649]), and interactional justice (H5c) ($\beta = 0.1396$, SE = 0.0376, CI [0.0657, 0.2135]) on support for tourism via residents' quality of life was established. These findings indicate that the positive relationship between perceived justice and support for tourism is stronger if residents benefit from tourism industry.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this study we investigated how the three dimensions of perceived justice may influence residents' support for further tourism development in China's rural destinations via residents' quality of life by employing the organizational justice framework. Furthermore, drawing on Weber's theory of formal and substantive rationality, a moderated effect of personal economic benefits on the hypothesized relationships was tested. Overall, the findings of this paper confirm that residents' perceived justice of the tourism development process plays an important role in delineating the residents' support for tourism. Additionally, this study showed that residents' perceived QOL presents a strong predictor of locals' support. It is commonly accepted that residents' support for tourism is a crucial element of sustainable tourism development. The focus on three justice dimensions in combination in the process of tourism development will positively affect residents' QOL and contribute to a support from their end.

This study is one of the first studies concentrating on the application of justice theory in the rural destination context. Rural destination research settings offer an unusual and unique context to test the justice theory. By investigating locals' justice perceptions relating to tourism development in the destination, this research further extends the justice theory and adds to our understanding of residents' perceived justice and its relation to both their quality of life and further support for tourism. The study offers important practical implications as well. The value of tourism has long shifted toward realizing its non-tangible benefits, such as quality of life of all stakeholders involved in production and consumption of a tourism product, including residents. The improvement of residents' QOL should be in the center of rural tourism development. As the findings demonstrate such approach to tourism development will contribute to residents' support toward further development. Thus, government officials and destination managers should focus on delineating the plans of tourism development to locals and ensure that the processes involved are considered just.

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