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DETERMINANTS OF RESIDENTS' SUPPORT FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AT WORLD HERITAGE SITE, LONGMEN GROTTOES, CHINA

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Abstract

Heritage tourism has become increasingly popular in China, generating significant economic benefits for tourist destinations. Although the rapid growth of tourism in heritage sites boosts business opportunities, it also brings challenges, such as gentrification. The influx of new capital and investment in housing can disrupt the local community's social and economic structure, often forcing residents to move away due to rising living costs and the inability to cope with rapid changes, as observed in the Longmen Communities. This shift in demographics tends to be profit-driven and can influence how residents perceive the benefits of tourism and their support for its development. This study examines the factors that shape residents' perceptions of tourism benefits and their support for tourism development at heritage sites. Four main factors—community attachment, community involvement, community gains, and trust in government—were analysed to understand their influence on perceived benefits. A quantitative research method and systematic sampling were used for data collection. The study offers valuable insights into residents' support for tourism development and the protection of heritage sites based on their perceived benefits. The findings provide guidance for government officials, tourism planners, and policymakers on shaping local opinions to foster heritage tourism.

Keywords: Residents' support, world heritage site, Longmen Grottoes, China, tourism development

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20 years, the interest in how tourism affects World Heritage Sites (WHSs) has gradually grown (Landorf, 2009), and heritage tourism has become an increasingly popular form of tourism across many global destinations (Rogerson & van der Merwe, 2016). Tourism is an industry that encompasses visitors, businesses, and communities, all of which are stakeholders in tourism development (J. Williams & Lawson, 2001). A direct and reciprocal link between visitors and residents is crucial to the tourism trade process (Gabriel Brida et al., 2014). Successful development is regarded as the assistance of locals for tourism (Gursoy et al., 2010; Nunkoo & So, 2016). Furthermore, the extent to which people support tourism depends much on how they view the effects of tourist development on their neighbourhoods (Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, & Barghi, 2017; Wang & Pfister, 2008). This paper aims to identify the relationship between community attachment, community involvement, community gains, and trust in government with residents' perceived benefits of tourism development at World Heritage Sites (WHS). The second objective is to assess the relationship between residents' perceived benefits of tourism development and their support for such development at WHS. The findings of this paper will shed light on how these four factors influence residents' perceived benefits and their support for tourism development at World Heritage Sites.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Heritage tourism and tourism impacts

Travelling to experience locations, artefacts, and activities that accurately depict the histories and cultures of the past and present is known as heritage tourism (Hargrove, C.M., 2011). Global recognition of a heritage site's brand image has transformed it into a popular destination for both international and local tourists (Rahman, 2018). During the past five decades, researchers have given increasing attention to the impacts of the tourism industry (Andereck et al., 2005; Ap, 1992; Eraqi, 2007; Vodeb et al., 2021; Zaei, M. E.2013) and these impacts can be divided into economic, socio-cultural, and environmental types (Andereck et al., 2005a; Gursoy et al., 2002; Milman & Pizam, 1988; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). All influences possess positive as well as negative facets throughout the evolution of a tourism destination. According to the cost-benefit approach (Lee, 2013; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011), positive impacts have been described as 'benefits', while negative impacts are considered 'costs' (Amuquandoh, 2010; Gursoy et al., 2010).

Social exchange theory

Social exchange theory has been the predominant theoretical framework for numerous investigations, formally or implicitly. This is a broad sociological theory that concentrates on understanding resource exchanges between people and groups during interaction situations (Ap, 1992). People interact with one another to seek out valuable things, whether material, social, or psychological. The fundamental tenet of SET is that people form opinions about objects of interest based on their respective costs and benefits. The theory is interdisciplinary, originating in economics, anthropology, sociology, and social psychology (Cook et al., 2013; Redmond & Uk, M. V, & Uk, A. 2015). This thorough approach to the theory enables it to investigate local views regarding tourism from all angles, including economic, environmental, and socio-cultural ones (Ap, 1992; Matthew & Stockton, 2011).

Residents' perceptions of tourism impacts

Research on perceived tourist impacts is strongly tied to the consequences of tourism in general (Ngan Anh and Rahman, 2023). As these effects are difficult to quantify, researchers frequently investigate how residents in tourism communities perceive the impacts of tourism (Andereck & Vogt, 2000). Members of a local community stated their opinions on the perceived effects of tourism development on local people, and these opinions were positively associated with their assessments of the advantages of tourism (Andereck et al., 2005b; Ap, 1992; Ko & Stewart, 2002). Understanding the residents' perception of the local heritage is important in obtaining their support for tourism development. Residents represent a primary stakeholder group in tourism development (Gabriel Brida et al., 2014).

Factors influencing residents' perceptions toward benefits of heritage

Residents' perceptions of tourism development are intricate, various, and related to many aspects. Four determinants affect their perceptions of tourism benefits in world heritage sites. These factors are elaborated as follows:

i) Community attachment

Attachment reflects the psychological connection between a person and specific items (Thomson et al., 2005). In terms of residents' positive and negative impressions of WHS inscription and tourism development, Rasoolimanesh (2015a) discovered considerable beneficial consequences for community attachment and the sense of belonging. Therefore, community attachment in this study represents a person's feeling of rootedness and community belonging (Jurowski et al. 1994).

ii) Community involvement

Community involvement is the process of developing a framework that enables the full participation of all stakeholder groups in cooperative decision-making and joint ownership of obligations and benefits (Y. Li & Hunter, 2015; Moghavvemi et al., 2021b). According to Lee (2013) and Edwin (2017), community involvement in this study may empower residents, enhance their awareness of the potential impacts of heritage tourism, and boost their respect for their culture and values at the world heritage sites. Thus, it is important to investigate the community's involvement in WHSs.

ii) Community gains

Community gain refers to the benefits that the local community receives from tourism activities in their area, as well as local member gains, including economy, environment, and society (Jaafar et al., 2015). For community members, if individuals perceive enough benefits that can be gained from tourism growth in WHSs for their community, they could have a strong inclination to encourage the growth of heritage tourism. Otherwise, they will have a negative attitude towards tourism development (Charag et al., 2021b; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Lankford & Howard, 1994b).

iv) Trust in government

Trust is crucial for social, political, and communal relationships (Bronfman et al., 2009). The concept of trusting the government in this study refers to the degree to which residents believe that their government is honest, competent, and accountable and that it is working in their best interest (Bouckaert & van de Walle, 2003). Nunkoo (2015) points out that the government cannot force local populations to have good attitudes towards the tourist sector, but it needs their support to achieve sustained growth. The Chinese government recognised that collaboration with communities and scenic locations is essential for historical tourism and world heritage sites, making trust in government a necessity for tourist growth.

Conceptual Framework

This study investigated the factors that can influence residents' opinions of the benefits of tourism and their willingness to support it. The conceptual framework for this study is based on Rasoolimanesh (2017b), Edwin Mohamed (2017b), and Lee (2013), with SET as the theoretical basis. Based on the literature review and the framework developed by three scholars, three community and government factors will be used to research residents' perceptions. The perceptions comprise community attachment, community involvement, community gains from these three community factors, and trust in government.

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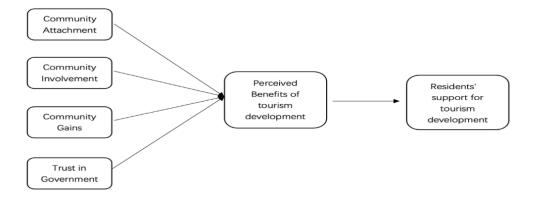


Figure 1: Conceptual framework adapted from Rasoolimanesh (2017), Edwin (2017), and Lee (2013).

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at the Longmen Grottoes Scenic Area, which included four main attractions: the West Mountain Grottoes, the East Mountain Grottoes, the Fragrant Hill Temple, and the White Garden. The target research population consisted of residents from the Longmen community, comprising 14,731 households. This quantitative research employed a questionnaire survey as the data collection instrument, with a sample size of 384 respondents, determined using the Raosoft software. Data collection was carried out through face-to-face and self-administered questionnaires. The questionnaire comprised 29 questions divided into four sections: Section A consisted of four questions related to demographic characteristics, Section B contained seven questions focused on residents' perceived benefits of tourism development, Section C consisted of 14 questions assessing four key factors, and Section D featured four questions regarding residents' support for tourism development.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Socio-demographic Profiles

Table 1 presents the data obtained from 380 respondents in the Longmen Community. Of these, 32.4% are male and 67.6% are female. The majority of respondents fall within the age range of 18 to 60, with 55.5% aged 18-25, 26.3% aged 26-40, and 14.7% aged 41-60. Only 3.4% are over 60 years old. Regarding educational background, 47.9% of the respondents hold a Bachelor's degree, followed by 15.5% with a high school education, 13.2% with secondary school education, 11.8% holding a Master's degree or other qualifications, and 2.4% with only primary school education. Lastly, 0.3% of the respondents reported having no formal education.

Table 1: Demographic profiles of the respondents

Demographic	N	Value	Number of	Percentage
Variables			respondents	(%)
Gender	380	Male	123	32.4
		Female	257	67.6
Age	380	18-25	211	55.5
		26-45	100	26.3
		46-60	56	24.7
		Over60	13	3.4
Education	380	No formal education	1	0.3
		Primary school	9	2.4
		Secondary school	50	13.2
		High school	59	15.5
		College	34	8.9
		Bachelor	182	47.9
		Master and over	45	11.8
Length of residency	380	1-5 Years	232	61.1
		6-10 Years	32	8.4
		11-15 Years	23	6.1
		16-20 Years	26	6.8
		Over 20 Years	67	17.6

N=Total number of residents.

Perceived benefits of tourism development

Table 2 presents the results for the perceived benefits, consisting of seven items with mean values ranging from 4.07 to 4.34. Overall, a significant majority of residents expressed strong support for the benefits brought by tourism development at the Longmen Grottoes. Each of these variables has a mean value exceeding 4.0, indicating that the residents of the Longmen Community clearly recognised the positive impacts of tourism. Specifically, tourism development was seen as contributing to an improved standard of living (M=4.31, SD=0.721), increasing employment opportunities (M=4.3, SD=0.755), enhancing public utilities (M=4.28, SD=0.755), attracting investments to the community (M=4.07, SD=0.913), fostering cultural exchange between visitors and locals (M=4.14, SD=0.798), promoting the preservation of local culture (M=4.30, SD=0.696), and positively impacting cultural identity (M=4.34, SD=0.717). These high mean values reflect the residents' strong perception of the benefits associated with tourism development.

Table 2: Descriptive analysis of the perceived benefits of tourism development.

_	e 2: Descriptive analysis of the perceived benefits of tourism of Statements	M	SD
NO.	Statements	IVI	SD
a	Developing tourism contributes to the standard of living	4.31	0.721
	in Longmen Street as a world heritage site.		
b	Developing tourism increases employment opportunities	4.30	0.755
	in Longmen Street as a world heritage site.		
c	Developing tourism improves public utilities in	4.28	0.755
	Longmen Street as a world heritage site.		
d	Developing tourism has attracted many investments to	4.07	0.931
	our community in Longmen Street as a world heritage		
	site.		
e	Developing tourism enhances cultural exchanges	4.14	0.798
	between visitors and residents in Longmen Street as a		
	world heritage site.		
f	Developing tourism provides an incentive for the	4.30	0.696
	preservation of local culture in Longmen Street as a		
	world heritage site.		
g	Developing tourism positively affects the cultural	4.34	0.717
6	identity of Longmen Street as a world heritage site.		

Factors affecting residents' perceived benefits of tourism development Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

In this study, four factors—community attachment, community involvement, community gains, and trust in government—were examined for their potential influence on the perceived benefits of tourism development. These factors were measured using 14 items, each demonstrating reliability with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.7. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation was conducted to identify the underlying dimensionality of the construct. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is above the cut-off value of 0.6, confirming the suitability of the data for factor analysis, with all four factors exceeding 0.6. Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity yields a significance level of p < .001, which is below 0.05, further confirming that the data were appropriate for factor analysis (Lee Sejong et al., 1992).

Table 3: Results of explanatory factor analysis (EFA)

Independent	Factors loadings	% of	'Cronbach's
Variables		variance	Alpha
CA-1	0.867		
CA-2	0.855	56.342%	0.881
CA-3	0.622		
CA-4	0.751		
CI-1	0.612		
CI-2	0.76	66.703%	0.806

Independent Variables	Factors loadings	% of variance	'Cronbach's Alpha
CI-3	0.843		
CG-1	0.805		
CG-2	0.802	73.664%	0.893
CG-3	0.704		
CG-4	0.655		
TIG-1	0.748		
TIG-2	0.835	79.345%	0.921
TIG-3	0.838		

Source: Author's Calculation

Multiple regression analysis

Multiple regression builds upon simple linear regression by using two or more independent variables to predict the value of a dependent variable. This method helps forecast and evaluate the strength of the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the combined effect of all independent variables is represented by the coefficient of determination (R^2). According to Lorenzo-Seva et al. (2010), an R^2 value above 0.3 is desirable. However, a low R^2 does not always signify a weak relationship, and a high R^2 does not always imply a strong one (Kafle, 2019).

As shown in Table 4, the R^2 value is 0.440, which exceeds 0.3, indicating that the four independent variables (community attachment, community involvement, community gains, and trust in government) collectively explain 44% of the variance in the dependent variable (perceived benefits of tourism development). Additionally, the Durbin-Watson value is 2.065, within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5, confirming that the variables in the dataset are independent and suitable for multiple regression analysis. This indicates that the model is free from multicollinearity issues and is well-constructed.

According to Table 4, the above result can be computed to the predicted line of regression equation:

$$[Y = b_0 + b_1(X_1) + b_2(X_2) + b_3(X_3) + b_4(X_4) + e]$$

Additionally, the four independent variables significantly predict the perceived benefits of tourism development, as shown by the F-value of 75.322 (p < 0.05). This indicates a substantial model fit with high variance, demonstrating that these four factors do influence the perceived benefits of tourism development. The standardised coefficient beta (β) reflects the extent of change in the dependent variable for each 1-unit change in an independent variable, with β values being either positive or negative. These values can be compared to

identify which independent variables most strongly predict the dependent variable (Lorenzo-Seva, 2010).

According to Table 4, community gains emerge as the strongest predictor of perceived benefits of tourism development, as it has the highest β value among the four factors. The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the independent variables (IVs) and the dependent variable (DV). Specifically, a 1-unit increase in perceived benefits of tourism would correspond to an increase of 1 unit in Community Involvement (B = 0.130, SE = 0.047), two units in Community Gains (B = 0.253, SE = 0.057), and two units in Trust in Government (B = 0.209, SE = 0.052).

Thus, the new equation:

$$Y = 1.538 + 0.130 (CI) + 0.253(CG) + 0.209(TIG) + e$$

- Y: Residents' Perceived benefits of tourism development
- bo: The Interception or Constant Value
- b₁: Community Involvement unstandardized coefficients value X₁: (CI) The Community Involvement Slope
- b₂: Community Gains unstandardized coefficients value X₂: (CIG) The Community Gains Slope
- b₃: Trust in Government coefficients value X₃: (CIG) Trust in Government Slope
- e: The error terms

Firstly, there is a significant positive relationship between community involvement and the perceived benefits of tourism development ($\beta=0.158,\,p=0.006<0.05$). This suggests that greater resident participation in tourism decision-making and planning leads to increased perceived benefits from tourism. Additionally, a strong, positive correlation exists between community gains and the perceived benefits of tourism development ($\beta=0.281,\,p=0.000<0.05$), indicating that the more the residents and their community benefit, the more positively they view tourism development. Lastly, trust in the government also shows a significant and strong relationship with the perceived benefits of tourism development ($\beta=0.234,\,p=0.000<0.05$). This finding implies that the more residents trust their government, the more they believe that tourism will be managed well and bring substantial benefits to them. On the other hand, community attachment does not show a significant correlation with the perceived benefits of tourism development in the Longmen Grottoes community ($\beta=0.097,\,p=0.062>0.05$).

Table 4: Results of multiple regression analysis of perceived benefitof tourism
develonment

Variables	Unstandardised	Std.	Standardised	t	р		
	Beta (B)	Error	Coefficients		_		
			Beta (\$\beta\$)				
Perceived benefits of tourism development							
Constant	1.538	0.163		9.450	0.000		
CA	0.087	0.047	0.097	1.870	0.062		
CI	0.130	0.047	0.158	2.763	0.006		
CG	0.253	0.057	0.281	4.454	0.000		
TIG	0.209	0.052	0.234	3.992	0.000		
Model summary: R^2 =0.440 Durbin-Watson=2.065 F-value=75.322 p=0.000							

Residents' Support for Tourism Development

This study also assessed the level of local support for tourism development at Longmen Grottoes. A 5-point Likert scale was used, with five statements measuring the residents' support levels, ranging from low to high. The findings were analysed based on the mean score for local support for tourism. As shown in Table 5, the mean scores for each statement ranged from 4.24 to 4.30, indicating that most local residents support tourism development at Longmen Grottoes.

 Table 5: Descriptive analysis of residents' support for tourism development

No.	Statements	M	SD
a	I believe that tourism should be actively encouraged in		0.691
	my community.		
b	I support developing new tourist facilities to attract more	4.24	0.730
	tourists to Longmen Grottoes.		
c	I support the local authorities' policies and decisions	4.30	0.692
	about tourism development.		
d	I support tourism and would like it to become an	4.24	0.730
	important part of my community.		

Note: M = mean value; SD= standard deviation 1= strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree

Multiple regression analysis examined the influence of perceived advantages and community support on tourism development. Based on Table 6, the perceived benefits statistically substantially predict residents' support for tourism development (F-value = 129.958, p < 0.05). The results can be computed to the predicted line of regression equation:

$$[Y = b_0 + b_1 (X_1) + e]$$

As indicated in Table 6, there is a significant positive relationship between residents' support for tourism development and their perceived benefits

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(r = 0.524, p < 0.05). This suggests that the more benefits residents perceive from tourism, the greater their support for its development. Additionally, the analysis shows that for each 1-unit change in perceived benefits, residents' support for tourism development increases by five units (B = 0.524, SE = 0.064).

$$Y = 2.030 + 0.524(PBTD) + e$$

Y: Residents' Support for Tourism Development

b_O: The Interception or Constant Value

b₁: Perceived benefits of tourism development unstandardized coefficients value X₁: (PBTD) Perceived benefits of Tourism Development Slope

e: The error terms

Table 6: Findings from a multiple regression study of development support for tourism

Variables	Unstandardised Beta (B)	Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients Beta (β)	t	p		
Residents' support for tourism development							
Constant	2.030	0.197		10.286	0.000		
PBTD	0.524	0.046	0.506	11.400	0.000		
Model sumi	mary: $R^2 = 0.254$ Du	rbin-Watson	=2.023 <i>F</i> -value	=129.958	p=0.000		

CONCLUSION

This study investigates the four factors that influence residents' perceptions of the benefits of tourism development. The primary aim is to determine the relationship between these factors and the perceived benefits of tourism, as well as the connection between these benefits and residents' support for tourism growth in Longmen Grottoes. The findings offer valuable insights for local government authorities responsible for tourism management. The results highlight the importance of community factors and government roles in promoting tourism development in Longmen Grottoes. It is recommended that the tourism development plans align with or enhance residents' views of their community to positively impact their perception of tourism's benefits and foster support for its growth. This study provides valuable insights but has certain limitations that future research could address. Firstly, it focused solely on a community near a World Heritage Site, highlighting the need to explore a broader range of community types. Furthermore, future studies should consider using qualitative methods to capture a more comprehensive understanding of residents' support for tourism development, their perceived benefits, and potential conflicting views on sustainable economic tourism (SET).

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