2018 International Conference On Business Innovation (ICOBI), 25-26 August 2018, NSBM, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Testing An Alternative Structural Model in Community Support for Sustainable Tourism Development in Sri Lanka

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Abstract— Tourism is one of the largest and fasted growing industries in the world and also in Sri Lanka. It is observed as a very important means of benefit to local communities. When examining residents' support for sustainable tourism development, community empowerment plays a major role since to achieve sustainable tourism development, community leaders and developers need to view tourism as a "community industry" that enables residents to be actively involved in determining and planning future tourism development with the overall goal of improving residents' quality of life (Franzoni, 2015). The community support models are widely tested using Social Exchange Theory (SET) over the years. However the basic assumption in SET is that power vested upon people is unidimensional whereas power is multidimensional as suggested by Scheyvens (1999). Hence this study extend the existing residents' support models in the literature by testing the empowerment scales suggested by Scheyvens (1999) using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) through AMOS. The results revealed that the empowerment scales in tourism are valid and community empowerment plays an important role in gaining community support for sustainable tourism development.

Keywords— community empowerment, community support, sustainable development

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism development is a double-edged sword for local communities and attitude directly affects the current and future tourism development (Hanafiah *et al*. 2013). It results several social and economic benefits as well as costs affecting the lives of the host community. The success of the industry is depend on the active support of the local residents hence it is important for the tourism planners to plan the development of the industry (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). Hence numerous studies has been studied the residents' attitude towards tourism development and majority is atheoretical in nature (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). The studies which has used a theoretical framework has most widely recognized Social Exchange Theory (SET) which implies that the residents' support is based on their evaluation on cost and benefits resulting from the industry (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011, Nunkoo *et al*. 2010, Sharply 2006, Nunkoo & So, 2015).

Scholars have conceptualized SET in various ways with different determinates to study the community support for tourism. Community attachment, economic gain, utilization of tourism resource base, the environmental attitude which has later categorized into two by aggregating the benefits and costs to a new model (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004) which segregated the impacts into benefits and costs and investigated their effects on support. This incorporated model incorporated two new determinants of attitudes: the state of the local economy and community concern. Gursoy and Rutherford (2004) further expanded on the above models and delineated the impacts into five categories: economic benefits; social benefits; social costs; cultural benefits; and cultural costs. More recently, Gursoy et al. (2009) further built upon the model developed by Gursoy and Rutherford (2004) and proposed that the perceived economic, social, and cultural benefits, the perceived social, socio economic costs and state of the local economy are determinants of residents' support for mass and alternative forms of tourism. This shows that SET does not involve a single conceptual model which sometimes leading to conflicting theoretical propositions among studies (Nunkoo & So, 2015). Nunkoo and So (2015) explained this by quoting Emerson (1976, p.335) as "SET contains sparks of controversy".

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The residents' support for tourism is a heavily research area where hundreds of scholars have investigated community perceptions and its relationship with residents' support for tourism. Nunkoo and So (2015) has made significant contributions to research on residents' support for tourism by developing a baseline model and comparing it with four competing models. As they argue Social exchange theory (SET) has been the most widely used theory to investigate residents' support for tourism from 1992 to date but many studies have conceptualized social exchanges in various ways by using different variables, reflecting one or more dimensions of SET. And there are some limitations of this as well.

Since the existing studies informed by SET are based on conflicting, yet theoretically sound, research propositions and leading to confusion among tourism scholars Nunkoo and So (2015) developed a baseline model of residents' support for tourism and compare it with four competing nested models using structural equation modeling. That method facilitated in uncovering new relationships among variables and was useful for development of theory. The study has further uncovered that residents' trust and their level of power to be intimately connected to their quality of life and their perceptions of tourism impacts.

As explained by Nunkoo and So (2015) in their baseline model the concept of power (PW) that exists in a set of specific relationships is central to SET, where actors are positioned within this network of power relations. As explained by Ap (1992, p. 679) "power is usually viewed as the capacity to attain ends" hence it adversely influences

residents' perceptions of tourism development, while positive reactions from residents are associated with a high level of power. Hence here they argue that power is a unidimensional construct and found that residents' trust in government and their level of power in tourism development as the two strongest determinants of quality if life. However in the limitations of their study they also states that "Thus, future studies should consider the multidimensional nature of these variables to further clarify the theoretical relationships tested in this study" (Nunkoo and So, 2015, p.12).

This shows that power is an important predictor of SET but still some controversy can be seen in the operationalization of power as a unidimensional construct. Hence Nunkoo and So (2015) suggest that empowering local residents in tourism is another effective strategy for fostering positive attitudes and improving quality of life and Education and training of local residents to work in the tourism sector are other important sources of local empowerment. This shows that empowerment can play a major role in residents' support in tourism literature.

Scheyvens (1999) has developed an empowerment framework and identified the unidimensional aspect of power in tourism which provide a mechanism with which the effectiveness of tourism initiatives, in terms of their impacts on local communities, can be determined. The framework has utilized Four levels of empowerment: psychological, social and political, as based on Friedmann's writing (Friedmann, 1992) and economic empowerment. This framework emphasize the importance of local communities having some control over, and sharing in the benefits of, eco-friendly tourism initiatives in their area and could be applied in both western and developing country contexts but, because it takes as its central concern the concept of empowerment, it is perhaps particularly pertinent when examining the extent to which indigenous people, or other disadvantaged groups, are benefiting from eco-friendly tourism.

While the rhetoric is compelling, only a handful of tourism studies have gone beyond the focus on community participation to specifically concentrate on empowerment in sustainable tourism (Cole, 2011; Scheyvens, 1999). Most recently, Cole's (2012) conceptual work discusses the importance of information and empowerment as being central to achieving sustainable tourism. This is particularly useful for the current study because it provides detailed descriptions of what empowerment should look like within sustainable tourism development. To deepen this discussion, Scheyven's (1999) descriptions of psychological, social, and political empowerment are reviewed below.

A. Social Empowerment

Social empowerment, within a tourism context, ensues when one perceives tourism as increasing his or her connection to the community. Scheyvens (1999) describes social empowerment in terms of enhanced community equilibrium, with residents feeling more connected and beginning to work together. This understanding of social empowerment highlights the parent literature's focus on individuals having access to social organizations that help maintain the local quality of life and individuals working together in an organized fashion to improve their collective lives. The negative social impacts of tourism recognized by Stronza and Gordillo (2008) in the Peruvian, Ecuadorian, and Bolivian Amazon are in stark contrast to these positive descriptions of social empowerment. These include the erosion of cooperation within the community, the unequal treatment of community members from tourism development, and some community members 'buying' themselves out of traditional community obligations.

B. Pshycological empowerment

A local community which is optimistic about the future, has faith in the abilities of its residents, is relatively self-reliant and demonstrates pride in traditions and culture can be said to be psychologically powerful (Scheyvens, 1999). In many small-scale, unindustrialized societies, preservation of tradition is extremely important in terms of maintaining a group's sense of self-esteem and well-being. Boley & McGehee, (2014) explain that psychological empowerment helps communities reevaluate the worth of their culture, natural resources, and traditional knowledge. They further explained it that this revaluation of the community leads to an increase in self-esteem and pride which has a positive influence on resident perceptions of tourism.

C. Political empowerment

Political empowerment, within a tourism context, speaks to residents having agency or control over the direction of tourism development within their community (Scheyvens, 1999). It is the dimension of empowerment that most closely resembles the overarching notion of residents gaining mastery of their affairs. More concretely, political empowerment necessitates residents having a voice in the tourism planning process and being able to share their concerns over tourism development. It is similar to community participation, but represents the highest rung of ladders of community participation because the attention is shifting away from mere inclusion of residents to residents having control over the tourism planning process. As with the other dimensions of empowerment, resident perceptions of political empowerment were found to have significant relationships with how they perceived the positive and negative impacts of tourism (Boley *et al*., 2015).

III. RESEARCH METHOD

A. Study area and sample

In order to examine the role of empowerment plays in sustainable tourism development this study was conducted in Sri Lanka considering the residents in Kandalama which is located in the northeastern side of the Dambulla in Sri Lanka. The hotel Heritance Kandalama is a well-known and successful hotel in Sri Lanka, which promote eco-friendly tourism with its sustainable architecture that is not to harm the natural environment however built in the midst of huge resistance from community leaders, villagers and several other pressure groups. 22 years back, this small tourism city had become a focal attention among the community of Sri Lanka when the local community of this area and several pressure groups were organizing huge protests against the construction of the Hotel Kandalama.Today the hotel is practicing many projects to empower communities and it is

awarded many local and international awards to their eco-friendly practices and CSR activities.

The population studied was residents, those who owned a home, including permanent and seasonal residents, were selected as the unit of analysis. Residents, who may or may not own a home, might have been an alternative sample, but these lists are often unavailable and not regularly updated. A homeowner list was obtained from Grama Sevaka officer of Kandalama village. There are 463 families in Kandalama village and the sample of 202 households. A quantitative approach was taken with 200 residents in Kandalama village who live 20km radius from hotel the closest village to Heritance Kandalama hotel. A door-to-door, pen and paper questionnaire using a systematic random sampling scheme commonly used within resident attitude research and this type of sampling scheme was chosen based upon its ability to best garner a representative sample of community residents, increase response rates, and include minority groups that may be left out from other sampling methods (Boely et al, 2015). Every 2nd household on the right side of the road was chosen to be surveyed until 202 usable questionnaires been completed. It is suggested that a minimum sample size of around 200 respondents is necessary to ensure effective use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. However, a sample size beyond 400 is also likely to be problematic as it may generate poor goodness-of-fit-indices (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988).

B. Method of Data collection

The questionnaire was developed from a review of existing literature dealing with residents' attitudes toward tourism development and was modified based on feedback received from several county officials and tourism professionals. The questionnaires were administered using a direct face-to face survey methodology because of the strength of this method in achieving high response rates. In total, 202 usable questionnaires were collected. The variables include a series of attitude items based on previous work by Gursoy and Rutherford (2004); Hanafiah et al. (2013); Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2010, 2011, 2012) and Nunkoo and So (2015) and tested as mediating variables: positive (10 items) and negative impact of tourism (10 items), support for tourism (6 items) which was the ultimate dependent variable. A Likert-type scale where 1 equaled strongly disagree and 5 equaled strongly agree was used for each attitudinal item (Maddox 1985). Independent variables included direct economic benefits from tourism (2 items); community empowerment measured using three dimensions, psychological (4 items), social (3 items) and political (3 items) and were based on work by Boley and Mcgehee (2014); Boley and Woosnam (2015).

C. Data Analysis

Ten of the 14 hypotheses tested were supported by the SEM model. The table I summarizes the Hypothesized relationships between constructs and observed relationship from the SEM.

When testing a model like the one presented previously, both the validity of the measures as well as the structural relationships between the constructs needed to be tested. These two tests (CFA and SEM) were performed using AMOS's Full Information Maximum Likelihood Estimation (FIML) within the Statistical Package for the Social Science's (SPSS.) FIML was chosen because of its availability within AMOS/SPSS, ease of use, and its superb ability to estimate missing data values.

There were three Hypotheses focused on testing the influence of direct Economic Benefit from eco-friendly tourism within the model. ''There is a negative relationship between direct economic benefits from eco-friendly tourism and perceived negative impact from eco-friendly tourism'' (b = 0.04; p = .922) and ''There is a positive relationship between direct economic benefits from eco-friendly tourism and residents' support for eco-friendly tourism' 'were not supported by the study (b = -0.47; p = .40). However, ''There is a positive relationship between direct economic benefits from eco-friendly tourism and perceived positive impact from eco-friendly tourism'' was supported by the study (b = 0.286; p = 0.000). This suggests that one's perception of economically benefiting from tourism had a greater influence over their positive or negative perception of tourism's impacts within the community than their support for tourism.

HYPOTHESIS TESTED

	Hypothesis			**Supported**
		Regression .weights	***P***	
H1	There is a positive relationship between direct economic benefits and residents' perceived positive impact of tourism	0.286**	0.000	Y
H2	Perceived social empowerment has a positive relationship with residents' perceived positive impact of tourism	-0.159*	0.003	N
H3	Perceived political empowerment has a positive relationship with residents' perceived positive impact of tourism	-0.57**	0.000	N
H4	Perceived psychological empowerment has a positive relationship with residents' perceived positive impact of tourism	0.06	0.916	N
H5	There is a negative relationship between direct economic benefits and residents' perceived negative impact of tourism	0.004	0.922	N
H6	Perceived social empowerment has a negative relationship with residents' perceived negative impact of tourism	0.291**	0.000	N
H7	Perceived political empowerment has a negative relationship with residents' perceived negative impact of tourism	0.492**	0.000	N
H8	Perceived psychological empowerment has a negative relationship with residents' perceived negative impact of tourism	-0.13	0.087	N
H9	There is a positive relationship between direct economic benefits and residents' support for tourism	-0.47	0.4	N
H10	There is a positive relationship between perceived positive attitude for tourism and residents' support for tourism	0.179*	0.008	Y

	Hypothesis			Supported
		Regression .weights	***P***	
H11	There is a negative relationship between perceived negative attitude for tourism and residents' support for tourism	0.415**	0.000	N
H12	Perceived psychological empowerment has a positive relationship with residents' support for tourism	0.44**	0.000	Y
H13	Perceived social empowerment has a positive relationship with residents' support for eco-tourism	0.053	0.59	N
H14	Perceived political empowerment has a positive relationship with residents' support for eco-friendly tourism	0.011	0.899	N

Three hypotheses (H4, H8, H12) which tested the relationship between psychological empowerment and the perceptions of the positive and negative attitudes of tourism and overall support for tourism. Two of these hypotheses (Hypothesis 4 ''Perceived psychological empowerment has a positive relationship with perceived positive impact from tourism'' b = 0.06; p = 0.916; Hypothesis 8 ''Perceived psychological empowerment has a negative relationship with perceived negative impact from tourism'' b = -0.13; p = 0.087) were rejected in the study. However; Hypothesis 12 ''Perceived psychological empowerment has a positive relationship with overall support for tourism'' b = 0.044; p < 0.001) were support by the study. This suggests that tourism which builds up resident pride and self-esteem significantly influences how residents support for tourism within the community over their attitude towards tourism.

Hypotheses 2, 6 and 13 tested the relationship between social empowerment and the perceptions of the positive and negative impact of tourism and overall support for tourism. Hypothesis 2 ''Perceived social empowerment has a positive relationship with perceived positive attitudes from tourism'' (b = -0.159, p = 0.003) and Hypothesis 6 ''Perceived social empowerment has a negative relationship with perceived negative impact from tourism'' (b = 0.291; p = 0.000) were both significant but not the expected sign reported hence not supported by the study. However, Hypothesis 13 'Perceived social empowerment has a positive relationship with overall support for tourism'' (b = 0.053, p = 0.59) was also not supported by the study. These findings suggest that social empowerment's do not influence perceptions of tourism's positive and negative impact within the community and their support for tourism. However it should be noted that when the impact of tourism constructs are removed from the model, social empowerments influence on support for tourism becomes positive and significant suggesting that social empowerment's relationship with support for tourism may be mediated through how residents perceive the impacts of tourism within the community

Hypotheses 3, 7 and 14 tested the relationship between political empowerment and the perceptions of the positive and negative attitudes of tourism and overall support for tourism. Both Hypothesis 3 ''Perceived political empowerment has a positive relationship with perceived positive impact from tourism'' (b = -0.57, p = 0.000) and Hypothesis 7 ''Perceived political empowerment has a negative relationship with perceived negative impact from tourism'' (b = 0.497; p = 0.000) were both significant but not the expected sign reported hence not supported by the study. Further, Hypothesis 14 'Perceived political empowerment has a positive relationship with overall support for tourism'' (b = 0.011, p = 0.899) was also not supported by the study. The finding that political empowerment did not directly influence support for tourism was unexpected and may be a factor of the low levels of perceived negative attitude within the community (Mean = 2.7). It is suggested that these empowerment's relationship with support for tourism should be further tested in a wider spectrum of communities to see if these findings persists.

According to the above hypothesis testing it is clear that empowerment has a significant contribution to the residents' support in the eco-friendly tourism resort development which has to be further tested to verify the model further. However to conclude the contribution of community to eco-friendly tourism resort development the model R squared should be calculated.

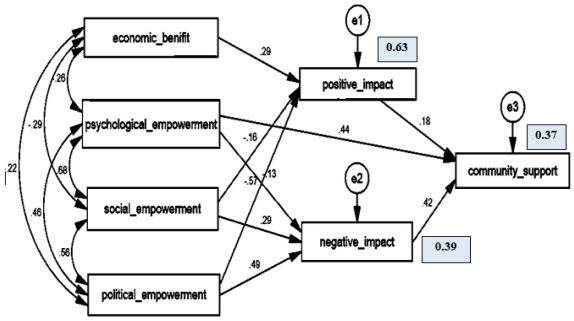


Fig. 5. The conceptual model tested

The figure I shows the squared multiple correlations of the model which indicate the total variance explained by each exogenous variable. According to the total variance explained the residents' support explain the total variance of 37%, perceived positive attitude for eco-friendly tourism 63%, and negative attitude for eco-friendly tourism 39% . These values explain the contribution of each variable to the model as total variance explained.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study's findings that there are both formal and substantive constructs influencing resident attitudes provides additional support for theoretical perspectives that embrace the view that residents' attitudes are more than a function of the economic benefits associated with tourism, but include substantive factors such as empowerment. It is identified that direct economic benefit of tourism will not completely change their support for the development but their attitude play an important role in their perceived support for the resort development. Results from the study also illuminate the long held relationship between the construct of Personal Economic Benefit from eco-friendly tourism and Support for Tourism. This indicates the continued importance of examining resident perceptions of economically benefiting

from tourism. While those employed in the tourism industry clearly see the direct personal economic benefits from tourism, those not employed in tourism may have a harder time seeing that they actually benefit. One recommendation based upon these findings would be to publish and promote the indirect personal economic benefits of tourism, including tax burden relief and the services subsidized by tourism income.

Further it has identified that psychological empowerment has direct influence on residents' support and therefore inclusion of empowerment has a significant impact on the residents' support model. These findings also highlight the importance of those with the responsibility of developing tourism to empower residents psychologically, socially, and politically; first, in order, to gain their psychological empowerment to support for tourism.

Mainly when the local people feel self-esteem and proud have a direct impact to their support for the tourism development. If managers are interested in fostering psychological empowerment among their residents, consideration should be given to marketing strategies that highlight the special features of the region from a local's perspective. If those responsible for developing tourism are able to simultaneously increase resident attitudes towards tourism while enhancing destination competitiveness through marketing initiatives grounded in resident empowerment, then resident empowerment can be a win-win sustainable development strategy for destinations. When the community feel proud and know how unique their community is will contribute positively to the development of the industry.

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