



Role of trust, emotions and event attachment on residents' attitudes toward tourism



Zhe Ouyang^{a,*}, Dogan Gursoy^a, Bishnu Sharma^b

^a Washington State University, Pullman, WA, USA

^b School of Business, Faculty of Arts & Business, University of the Sunshine Coast, Maroochydore DC, QLD, Australia

HIGHLIGHTS

- Examine resident's attitude from both cognitive and affective perspectives using the SET and cognitive appraisal theory.
- Resident's support is a function of cognitive and affective assessment of perceived impacts and trust in government.
- Trust in government influence residents' support indirectly through perceived impacts and experienced emotions to an event.
- Conceptualize the event attachment construct and identify its moderating effects on the dual assessing processes.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of residents' trust in government and their emotions toward an event on their perceptions of potential impacts and their support. This study also examines the moderating role of event attachment on the strength of relationships between residents' trust in government and their impacts perceptions, emotional responses, and as well as their support based on social exchange theory and cognitive appraisal theory. Findings clearly indicate that residents' support is a function of both cognitive and affective assessment of perceived impacts. Trust in government influences directly residents' support and indirectly through perceived impacts and experienced emotions toward an event. Findings further suggest that level of event attachment moderates the effects of trust on residents' perceptions of impacts, their emotions, as well as on their support.

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1. Introduction

Since local residents directly interact with visitors, their support has been viewed as one of the most critical determinants of success of tourism development (Sharma, Dyer, Carter, & Gursoy, 2008). With the support of residents, a tourism event can be transformed into a memorable and enjoyable experience for both hosts and visitors and promote sustainable community development (Choi & Murray, 2010; Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Potwarka & Banyai, 2016). Previous studies have examined residents' attitude formation process toward development of an obtrusive tourism venue in their community utilizing the principles of the Social Exchange Theory (SET), and concluded that residents

form their attitudes based on the results of their evaluation of potential benefits and costs from such development (e.g. Gursoy, Yolal, Ribeiro, & Netto, 2016; Lee, 2013; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Styliadis & Terzidou, 2014). Those studies have also identified a number of predictors that influence residents' perceptions of impacts and their support, such as residents' community attachment, eco-centric values (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006), place image, attitudes towards mega-events (Styliadis, 2016), and public trust (Gursoy et al., 2016).

SET was popularized in tourism impact domain by Ap (1992) as a theoretical framework that can explain the underlying rationale of residents' responses to tourism development. It suggests that individuals evaluate an exchange based on the assessment of

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: zhe.ouyang@wsu.edu (Z. Ouyang), dgursoy@wsu.edu (D. Gursoy), bsharma@usc.edu.au (B. Sharma).

potential benefits and costs that the exchange can generate, and the overall evaluation of the exchange determines their behavioral responses. Most studies that have utilized the SET as the main theoretical framework assumed that residents are rational decision makers. However, the assumption of rationality of local residents may not be accurate as neurocognitive and psychological studies indicate that individuals' emotions can influence their judgements, decision makings, and behaviors (e.g. [Damasio, 1999](#); [Pham, 2007](#)). Thus, the mere application of SET to explain the formation of residents' attitudes toward tourism may not be sufficient. Similar concerns have also been raised by [Ward and Berno \(2011\)](#) and [Woosnam \(2011\)](#) who called for further examination of antecedents of residents' attitudes and behaviors towards tourism. Therefore, this study explores the emotional perspective of residents' responses to an obtrusive tourism venue development by incorporating the cognitive appraisal theory. Effects of emotions on various aspects of consumer behaviors have been well documented in service marketing research ([Yang & Hanks, 2016](#)). Particularly, studies suggest that information processing strategies used by individuals during a service encounter are largely dependent on their emotions (e.g., [Bless, Bohner, Schwarz, & Strack, 1990](#); [Schwarz & Bless, 1991](#)). Consequently, variations in information processing strategies used by individuals generate different evaluations of the same service encounter. Applying this rationale to tourism impact domain, it also seems likely that residents' attitude formation toward an obtrusive tourism venue such as a mega-event might be influenced by their emotional responses to the event.

Another factor that can influence the outcome of an exchange is the level of trust ([Blau, 1964](#)) between actors according to the SET. In the field of tourism, political trust is reported to be a significant predictor of residents' perceptions, as well as their corresponding support behavior ([Gursoy et al., 2016](#); [Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2016](#)). While the perception of trustworthiness can inspire favorable and collaborative behaviors, distrust is likely to result in suspicion and uncooperative behaviors ([Levi & Stoker, 2000](#); [Seetanah & Sannasse, 2015](#)). Since most decisions related to hosting of a mega-event is made by a small group of individuals within government agencies, trustworthiness of those individuals and government agencies are likely to have a significant impact on residents' attitudes and behaviors toward the hosting of a mega-event in their community. However, previous empirical studies show that residents may support the hosting of a mega-event even when their level of trust in those individuals and agencies falls into distrust range (e.g. [Gursoy et al., 2016](#)). This contradiction suggests the existence of alternative factors that may moderate the relationship between trust and perceived impacts, as well as the support.

One of the factors that can influence this relationship is individuals' psychological attachment to an event. Attachment is a relationship-based construct that reflects the emotional bond connecting an individual with a particular target ([Bowlby, 1979](#)). Stronger attachment to a particular target (i.e., object, person) induces a state of emotion-laden mental readiness that influences the allocation of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral resources towards that object ([Holmes, 2000](#)). Previous studies investigating the construct of attachment in tourism domain are mainly focused on community attachment and place attachment as antecedents of perceived impacts and support (e.g. [Gursoy & Kendall, 2006](#); [Stylidis, 2016](#); [Yuksel, Yuksel, & Bilim, 2010](#)). This study utilizes the event attachment construct, which is conceptualized based on the psychological attachment theory, and argues that residents' attachment to a mega-event determines the strength of the relationships between political trust and perceived impacts, and emotions to a mega-event, as well as their support.

Thus, this study aims to examine the formation of residents'

attitudes toward an obtrusive tourism venue such as a mega-event from both cognitive and affective perspectives utilizing the SET and cognitive appraisal theory ([Nyer, 1997](#); [Watson & Spence, 2007](#)). This study further examines whether event attachment works as a moderator that alters the strength of the effects of residents' trust in government on perceived impacts, experienced emotions, and support.

Drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of the SET and cognitive appraisal theory, this study aims to make several theoretical contributions to the literature. First, findings of this study will contribute to the literature by examining residents' affective responses in addition to commonly examined cognitive evaluations as one of the determinants their level of support. Second, findings will help us understand how event attachment, developed based on the premises of psychological attachment theory, can moderate the effects of trust on residents' perceptions of impacts, as well as on their support. Furthermore, this study seeks to advance existing knowledge on the factors that may influence locals' attitudes and behaviors toward tourism and provide practical strategies to manage emotions, trust and impact perceptions. Given the importance of residents' support for the success of any form of tourism development, identifying the factors that may moderate the relationship between political trust and support is crucial for both policy makers and organizers of mega-events. Findings of this study can have critical implications in communities where trust in politicians is especially low. Findings can be utilized to develop customized communication strategies that target residents with varying attachment levels (i.e., low, moderate and high) in order to increase the support level for the hosting of an event. Furthermore, by examining both perceived impacts and emotions as possible mediators, findings may enable organizers and policy makers to develop mechanisms to minimize the impact of low political trust on residents' support for tourism development.

2. Literature review

2.1. Residents' support for hosting mega-event: perceived impacts

Local residents' support for any form of tourism development depends on a number of factors. Previous studies suggest that residents' perceptions of tourism impacts is one of the most critical determinants of their support ([Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2010](#); [Stylidis & Terzidou, 2014](#)). As suggested by the SET, residents who believe that hosting a mega-event will bring more benefits than costs will support the idea of hosting a mega event in their community (e.g. [Gursoy et al., 2016](#); [Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012](#); [Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo, & Alders, 2013](#); [Zhou & Ap, 2009](#)). Since this relationship has been widely formulated and tested, the present work will not discuss it in detail. The reader is directed to [Gursoy et al. \(2016\)](#) for a recent review of tourism impacts and its effects on tourism development.

Based on the SET and the preceding discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1a. A positive relationship exists between perceived benefits of hosting a mega-event and residents' support for it.

Hypothesis 1b. A negative relationship exists between perceived costs of hosting a mega-event and residents' support for it.

2.2. Residents' emotional responses

Emotions are considered to be critical to understanding the underlying reasoning of consumers' behaviors in marketing literature ([Dubé & Menon, 2000](#); [Yu & Dean, 2001](#)) because emotions

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