



# How does destination social responsibility contribute to environmentally responsible behaviour? A destination resident perspective

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## ABSTRACT

Based on stakeholder theory and social exchange theory, this study developed an integrated model to demonstrate that destination social responsibility (DSR) influences tourism impacts (both positive and negative impacts), overall community satisfaction, and both directly and indirectly influences resident environmentally responsible behaviour (ERB). The model was examined using a sample of 453 residents living on the Gulangyu Island, a famous island tourism destination of Xiamen, China. Results show that DSR enhances residents' perception of positive tourism impacts, improves overall community satisfaction and contributes to resident ERB. However, the effect of DSR on negative tourism impacts was not significant. Thus, positive tourism impacts and overall community satisfaction partially mediated the effect of DSR on resident ERB. The study findings offer both theoretical insights and practical implications on destination management and sustainable destination development.

## 1. Introduction

Successful tourism development should be properly planned and managed (Byrd, Bosley, & Dronberger, 2009; Southgate & Sharpley, 2002; Yuksel, Bramwell, & Yuksel, 1999). Destinations should develop policies and activities for their sustainable development (Byrd et al., 2009; Yuksel et al., 1999). As the development of a tourism destination is so reliant on environmental and cultural resources, these resources need to be managed and developed responsibly to achieve sustainable tourism development (Su, Huang, & Huang, 2016). One means to achieve sustainable development is through socially responsible activities in the tourism destination (Su & Swanson, 2017). Thus, some literature has emphasized the importance of destination social responsibility (DSR) for sustainable destination development (e.g., Su et al., 2016; Su & Swanson, 2017).

Another key factor for sustainable destination development is on the stakeholders as important players in the process of sustainable development of destinations (Byrd et al., 2009). Sustainable destination development greatly relies on the destination's natural environment (Cheng & Wu, 2015; Su & Swanson, 2017); whether stakeholders adopt environmentally responsible behaviour or not has important implications on a destination's natural environment (Cheng & Wu, 2015; Cheng, Wu, & Huang, 2013; Ramkissoon, Smith, & Weiler, 2013; Ramkissoon, Weiler, & Smith, 2012, 2013; Su & Swanson, 2017).

However, when compared to tourists, destination residents may have greater impact on the natural environment at a destination because they have more extensive contact with the destination and their activities would exert a stronger impact upon the destination environment. Therefore, whether residents adopt ERB will seriously impact the natural environment of a destination, and in turn influence sustainable destination development.

DSR represents the responsibility for relevant stakeholders in the destination to generate economic benefits for local people, increase their well-being, and reduce negative economic, environmental and social impacts (Su et al., 2016). DSR can improve positive tourism impacts, and at the same time weaken negative tourism impacts perceived by residents. According to stakeholder theory, destination residents as the key stakeholder group of a destination, can get benefits from DSR. The gained benefits and cost reduction can lead to resident satisfaction with tourism development and the community (Ko & Stewart, 2002; Vargas-Sa'nchez, Plaza-Mejía, & Porras-Bueno, 2009; Vargas-Sa'nchez, Porras-Bueno, & Plaza-Mejía, 2011). At the same time, social exchange theory posits that two parties make exchanges based on their benefits and costs, and exchanges can be achieved only if both parties feel that they benefit more from the exchange than they forsake. Thus, in order to gain more benefits from DSR, residents may adopt environmentally responsible behaviour to protect the destination's natural environment, which in turn contributes to sustainable

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destination development. However, to the best of our knowledge, few studies have empirically examined the relationships among DSR, tourism impacts, overall satisfaction with community and residents' environmentally responsible behaviour.

Drawing on the existing literature, especially on the work of Su et al. (2016), and based on stakeholder theory and social exchange theory, this study aims to develop and examine an integrated theoretical framework that has destination social responsibility (DSR) as a direct predictor of resident ERB, but also indirectly affect ERB through tourism impacts (positive and negative) and overall community satisfaction. Taken collectively, the contribution of this research for academics and practitioners is demonstrated in three aspects. Firstly, a contribution is made in the form of destination social responsibility (DSR), which is derived from CSR but with specific application to tourism destination management. Secondly, it is the first study of its kind to explore ERB from the resident perspective in examining whether DSR, tourism impacts and overall community satisfaction act as antecedents to ERB. Finally, through application of the integrated model, this study has explored the mediating roles of tourism impacts and overall community satisfaction between DSR and resident ERB.

## 2. Theoretical foundation and hypotheses

### 2.1. Stakeholder theory and its application in tourism destination

From a narrow sense, stakeholders are viewed as actors of organizations (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Zammuto, 1984); from a broad perspective, a stakeholder is defined as any group or individual who can impact, or is impacted by, the achievement of a corporation's purpose (Freeman, 1984). Based on Freeman's (1984) definition, Donaldson and Preston (1995) identified that a stakeholder group or individual must have a legitimate interest in the organization. Stakeholder theory indicates that various individuals and groups could support and influence the organization, and could be reciprocally supported and impacted by it (Freeman, 1984).

Destinations can be defined as geographical locations that include all services and infrastructure needed for the visitors and offer tourist experience (Buhalis, 2000). The concept of stakeholder is relevant to destinations as a destination is perceived to be a network of interdependent and multiple stakeholders (Waligo, Clarke, & Hawkins, 2013). Prior studies claimed that proactive efforts addressing all stakeholders' interests lead to significant returns to the destination as a whole (Formica & Kothari, 2008). Yuksel et al. (1999) found that incorporating stakeholder views and caring for their interests can significantly reduce conflicts in the long term. Sautter and Leisen (1999) demonstrated that interested stakeholders tend to collaborate more in the tourism development process.

There are four main stakeholder groups in the destination context: residents, entrepreneurs, government officials, and tourists (Byrd et al., 2009; Goeldner & Richie, 2003). Many studies treated residents as the core stakeholder group (e.g., Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Byrd et al., 2009; Goeldner & Richie, 2003; Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Su et al., 2016), and demonstrated that residents' perceptions of destination development and management would affect their attitudes and behaviours (Gursoy et al., 2002; Nunkoo, Gursoy, & Juwaheer, 2010; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011a; Su et al., 2016).

### 2.2. Social exchange theory and its application in tourism

Social exchange theory analyzes interaction between two parties by focusing on the benefits and costs accruing to each party in the exchange process. It argues that interactions are likely to continue if both parties feel that they are benefiting more than they lose in the exchanges. Ap (1992) regarded social exchange theory as "a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation" (p.

668). Social exchange theory is widely used by researchers who attempt to study destination residents' attitudes and behaviours (Byrd et al., 2009; Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2010; Lee, Kang, Long, & Reisinger, 2010; Nunkoo et al., 2010; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011a). Especially, it provides a theoretical base for researching tourism impacts assessment by destination residents (Nunkoo et al., 2010, Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011a).

In the tourism literature, applications of social exchange theory confirm that resident behaviours are based on their assessments of the benefits and costs resulting from tourism development (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Long, Perdue, & Allen, 1990; Nunkoo et al., 2010; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011a). If residents assess that their gains are greater than the costs, they are willing to make the exchange with the industry (Nunkoo et al., 2010, Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011a).

### 2.3. Destination social responsibility (DSR)

A destination includes many tourism-related sectors, such as tour operation, ground transportation, airline, accommodation, restaurants, and travel agencies. Key players in these sectors face challenges in relation to social responsibility as major stakeholders that can influence the destination's economy, environment, culture, and society. Industry associations often develop self-regulatory guidelines to promote socially responsible business practices (Su et al., 2016). Many studies have examined corporate social responsibility in the tourism industry, such as airlines (Lee, Seo, & Sharma, 2013), hotel firms (Singal, 2014), restaurants (Kim & Kim, 2014), and the accommodation sector (Garay & Font, 2012). From the community perspective, residents perceive tourism impacts as the result of the collective activities of all stakeholders within a destination (Su et al., 2016). Thus, as Su et al. (2016) suggest, "the concept of CSR in the field of organisational behaviour is not completely suitable to the destination context" (p. 3). There is a need to propose destination social responsibility (DSR) as a distinctive concept. In accordance with Su et al. (2016), this study defines DSR as the "collective ideology and efforts of destination stakeholders to conduct socially responsible activities as perceived by local residents" (p. 3). According to stakeholder theory and social exchange theory, perceived DSR by residents will affect their perceptions of tourism impacts, and in turn influence their attitudes and behaviours.

### 2.4. The relationship between DSR and tourism impacts

Tourism has a great potential to affect destination stakeholders through both positive and negative impacts (Byrd et al., 2009; Randle & Hoye, 2016). Tourism impacts can be analysed from different perspectives, such as economic, social, cultural and environmental; and in each of these areas, the impacts can be either positive and negative (Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013). For instance, tourism can help to improve the standard of living of a destination (Tosun, 2002), but it can also increase the price of goods and services (Weaver & Lawton, 2001). In relation to social impacts, there is evidence that tourism contributes to crowdedness and deterioration of traditional culture (Andereck et al., 2005). On the other hand, tourism can also lead to better public infrastructure as well as recreational facilities (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011a). While some researchers have demonstrated that tourism can be a means of revitalising cultures (Wang, Fu, Cecil, & Avgoustis, 2006), others argue that tourism can be a "cultural exploiter" and disrupt the traditional cultural structures (Pearce, 1996). Finally, tourism can help to create good awareness of environmental protection and keep the local community environment clean (Ritchie, 1988). At the same time, tourism can cause damage to the natural environment through degradation of vegetation and disturbance of wildlife (Var & Kim, 1989). Although numerous studies have explored the antecedents of tourism impacts (Nunkoo et al., 2010; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011a), few studies have examined DSR as a determinant of tourism impacts and

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