

## Understanding how a rural Islamic enclave feels about supporting tourism development for their community

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### Abstract

This paper aims to enhance the meaningfulness of resident support for tourism development studies, that are largely based on a costs/benefits analysis. An undeveloped rural Islamic enclave is used as a case study. Reported outcomes for this popular stream of research vary widely because of inconsistent conceptualization and measurement of concepts, together with resident community heterogeneity. The paper develops a framework to assist researchers in generalizing their results. In addition, we conduct an empirical study to illustrate the benefits of such a framework, using trust as a moderator. A survey of 236 residents was conducted in a rural Islamic community at a nascent stage of tourism development. The impact of economic benefits on resident support was significant for residents with a low level of trust in local government officials. In contrast, a social benefit factor was important for residents' with high levels of trust in local officials. Using trust in local government actors as a moderating influence is novel to the literature.

**Keywords:** Tourism impacts, Benefits and costs, Resident support, Trust, Rural community, Nascent stage.

## Introduction

Tourism is promoted as a powerful instrument for boosting local economies and fostering community development. A tool that is becoming more important for developing economies with rural poor communities (UNWTO, 2017). Furthermore, resident support for tourism development is viewed as a major prerequisite for effective community development (Andereck et al., 2005). Accordingly, the importance of salient research studies remains high (Hadinejad et al., 2019; Lulu et al., 2023; Nunkoo et al., 2013; Zuo et al., 2017). Indeed, Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011) argue that active resident support is essential for tourism development.

Researchers have investigated the benefits and costs related to tourism development. In particular, studies have examined this issue through the lens of local residents (e.g., Caliskan and Ozer, 2021; Celik and Rasoolimanesh, 2023; Eyisi et al., 2023; Gannon et al., 2021; Lulu et al., 2023; Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2016; Zuo et al., 2017). However, limited research has investigated resident support for tourism in rural areas (e.g., Bajrami et al., 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Indeed, the need for more research into rural resident support for tourism development is compelling. Substantive differences exist between rural and urban areas (Huo et al., 2023; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017). Furthermore, this is the first known study to examine resident support for tourism in the rural setting of a religious enclave.

In addition, there is no consensus about the most important factors needed to secure resident support for tourism development. Indeed, there is a wide variation in the empirical outcomes arising from the testing of relationships between perceived benefits and/or costs of tourism development and resident support. Over the past forty years, scholars have reported conflicting results. This situation inhibits the drawing of sound conclusions that can be operationalized by destination managers. Three factors appear to be at play. First, the conceptualization of the costs and benefits of tourism development can vary. Most research reflects either a two-dimensional model of overall costs versus overall benefits or a tri-dimensional model based on the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental aspects. Inconsistency in results is unsurprising given the different dimensional models used to reflect benefits/costs (Gursoy et al., 2019).

Second, the positive or negative beliefs about a specific tourism development may not directly translate into resident support because of the heterogenous nature of communities (Andereck and Vogt, 2000; Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2016). In general, Sharpley (2014) argues that research into resident decision-making is oversimplified, if context is not taken into account. Indeed, situational factors can change an individual's decision-making substantially. For example, one important contextual factor advanced to account for discrepancies in studies is the stage of tourism development (Eyisi et al., 2023; Hunt and Stronza, 2014; Caliskan and Ozer, 2021). When destinations are in a very early stage of development, they are more likely to be focused on the benefits of tourism, especially economic factors. Further contextual factors include affective responses (Ouyang et al., 2017) and demographic factors, such as length of residence and income levels (Gursoy et al., 2019).

Third, is the inconsistency in how we conceptualize and measure concepts (Gursoy et al., 2019). This inconsistency makes it difficult to compare the results of research across

contexts (Rasoolimanesh and Seyfi, 2021). The concept of resident support for tourism development has been conceptualized in many ways. Residents may support tourism in general without the form of tourism development being specified (e.g., Gursoy et al., 2019; Gautum and Bhalla, 2023). In contrast, specific attributes of a development proposal, such as an international horse park (e.g., Cardenas et al., 2017) or hotel and casino developments (e.g., Nunkoo and Smith, 2013) may be specified. Moreover, local residents may express their support for tourism as an industry without necessarily aligning their preferences with a specific destination (e.g., Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2012; Park et al., 2017). While the literature tends to treat such disparate measurements equally, factors influencing the concept of resident support for tourism development may vary considerably.

For example, rural residents in Iran, a Muslim-majority country, strongly support tourism development, with economic objectives being the most valued aspect (Abdollahzadeh and Sharifzadeh, 2014). However, the authors qualified this finding by stating that community views are not homogeneous. Aspects of faith, culture, and social dynamics differed. In support, Cifci et al. (2023) also highlight the importance of faith elements in resident support for tourism development. Accordingly, potential differences in socio-cultural dynamics, within a rural Islamic enclave in a Buddhist country, warrant further investigation of resident support for tourism.

The essence of this paper is to develop a meaningful framework that allows for a more effective approach to compare resident support studies using costs versus benefits theory. However, we are mindful of the need to illustrate this conceptual framework in practice. Accordingly, we conducted a small empirical study to show how a micro layer of resident support may be influenced by various costs or benefits. In particular, we examined the interdependence of benefits/costs of tourism development with trust in local government actors to explain the readiness of local residents to support local community management in developing tourism. Our context is a small rural community, at a nascent stage of tourism development. Social exchange theory (SET) complemented by attribution theory provides the underlying theoretical rationale. The inclusion of trust in local government actors, as a moderating influence in this study, is novel to the literature.

## **Literature Review**

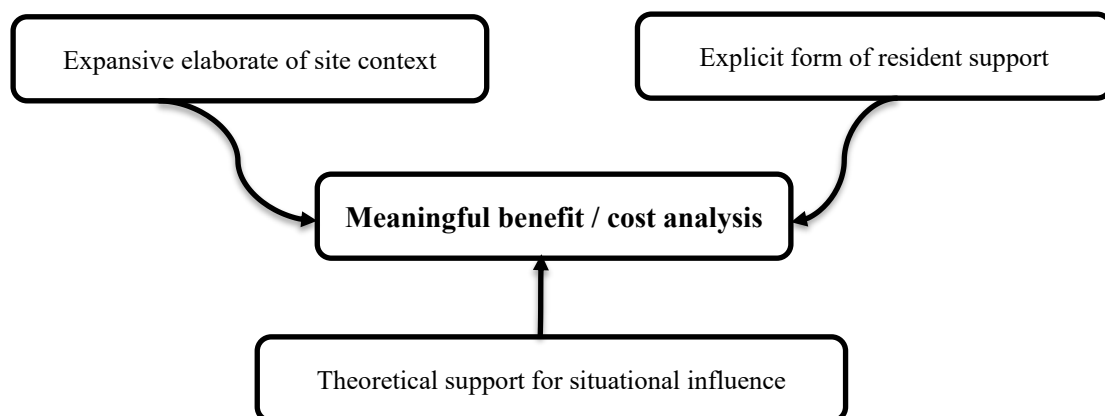
The dominant approach to explain costs and benefits driving resident support for tourism development has been through social exchange theory (SET) (e.g., Cardenas et al., 2017; Gursoy et al., 2019; Hadinejad et al., 2019; Rasoolimanesh and Seyfi, 2021; Zuo et al., 2017). The theory is well-regarded as a suitable mechanism for understanding the heterogeneous nature of tourism communities, where individuals or groups of residents hold differing attitudes toward the effects of tourism and support for further tourism development (Gursoy et al., 2019).

Drawing from SET, the drivers of resident support largely comprise factors drawn from either (1) the two dimensions of costs and benefits, (2) a triple bottom line extension or (3) a combination of both approaches. In all approaches, wide variation has been reported (Celik and Rasoolimanesh, 2023; Caliskan and Ozer, 2021). Likewise, studies have found different factors affecting resident support for tourism development. While

scholars, such as Uysal et al. (2016) and Tosun (2002), found economic factors to be significant drivers of resident support, Liang and Hui (2016) reported that positive socio-cultural and environmental drivers were the main drivers. In contrast, Dyer et al. (2007) reported a different mix again with economic and socio-cultural factors the key drivers. This wide variation in results was recently reviewed by Gursoy et al. (2019) in a meta-analytic approach. They summed up the literature by stating that economic benefits have the most impact on support for tourism development, whereas the impact from perceived costs appears to be trivial. Their finding suggests that the wrong questions are still being asked. We need to find out why effects from these factors are substantial or trivial?

We assume that researchers will continue to investigate the costs and benefits accruing to individuals and communities. We further assume that greater consideration will be given to the heterogenous nature of communities in empirical studies. A template for a more meaningful cost/benefit analysis of resident support for tourism development is proposed, that may assist in moving this field of research forward. The template comprises three elements and is depicted at Figure 1. Elaboration for each element is provided next.

**Figure 1: Template for benefit/cost analysis in resident support for tourism studies**



### Elaboration of Site Context

Researchers have long argued that greater attention needs to be placed on the research context (e.g., Andereck and Vogt, 2000; Sharpley, 2014). However, a brief examination of resident support studies suggests that most studies describe information about residents and their environment. Indeed, much of this narrative is extensive. On closer examination, what appears to be lacking is a systematic description of the site context. Furthermore, the narrative for most studies appears to be unique to that study. Presenting the uniqueness of a research site may be important but without anchoring key elements within a broader narrative, each study remains isolated from the next. This form of narrative has been criticized for being place-specific (e.g., Nunkoo et al., 2013; Opperman, 2000). In such narratives, the opportunity for meaningful comparisons between studies is limited and knowledge is not added to the field.

To provide a meaningful description of the site context, we suggest five categories of

information to describe respondent characteristics (see Table 1). The stage of tourism development for the community has been acknowledged as an important situational influence (e.g., Hunt and Stronza, 2014). In turn, we suggest three sub-categories for the stage of development to provide a more expansive elaboration: (1) economic standing of the host country, (2) state of tourism development for the community and (3) level of governmental support for community development in general. A fourth category, suggested by Gursoy et al. (2019), involves resident characteristics, such as length of residence and income levels. We add one further category to reflect different cultural values, political economy, and community goals (Nunkoo and Smith, 2013; Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy, 2016). For instance, cultural values, relating to power relationships and trust, may differ between collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Yodsuwan et al., 2018).

We illustrate how this form of context description could be used in Table 1. Drawing from the literature, and informal discussions with ten tourism experts and residents of a rural community, we distill a set of characteristics that describe the five criteria proposed. We also recognize that some site contexts might not fit the five criteria proposed in this paper. However, the principles of selecting descriptive criteria before describing site characteristics remains paramount. Indeed, we suggest the focus should be on quality rather than quantity of descriptive material.

**Table 1: Exemplars of contextual characteristics for site comparison**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Characteristics for the Bo Saen Community in Thailand</b>
Economic standing of host country	Thailand is an emerging economy with a large rural population.
State of tourism development and existing tourism infrastructure (Undeveloped, developing or over-tourism).	Undeveloped country. At a local level, existing business or leisure travel is extremely limited. No practical experience in marketing to potential tourists. Extremely limited hospitality infrastructure
Governmental agency support	National government-initiated CBT support program within the 3 <sup>rd</sup> National Tourism Plan of Thailand. Office for Agriculture and Office for Local Development make frequent visits to assist community develop in general. Frequent assistance with projects from local colleges and Universities.
Site location and resident profile	Bo Saen is in a rural area and comprises 8 villages with a total population of about 7,000 persons, from nearly 2000 households. One-third of residents are farmers. Most residents have lived in Bo Saen for most of their life.
Community mission, attitudes and cultural norms	Islamic community in a strongly Buddhist country. Bo Saen administration goal is to create a strong, self-reliant community. Have two community centers, a recognition of their weaknesses and a strong willingness to learn.

Criteria	Characteristics for the Bo Saen Community in Thailand
	Common language is Thai or Malay.

### Form of Resident Support

The conceptualization and measurement of resident support is inconsistent (Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2017). For instance, measurement scales range from two to nine items (Boley and Strzelecka, 2016). The authors concluded that the diversity of measures for tourism support “hinders the ability of resident attitude researchers to compare findings across communities” (p.238). Furthermore, we argue that resident support is a multi-layered concept that needs to be matched to the circumstances of the individual community. Accordingly, we utilize a classification system, widely used in tourism, that depicts multi-layered theoretical structures as macro, meso and micro (e.g., Agarwal et al., 2024; McCabe, 2024). Macro levels indicate a broad application, while micro levels depict much narrower and specific aspects of the topic under investigation. This depiction of three levels for resident support for tourism development is novel to the literature.

At the top of this multi-layered structure, resident support is conceptualized as support for tourism development in general. This macro notion of support is not attached to any community. Macro forms of support could include mass versus alternative forms of tourism. An exemplar conceptualization could be expressed as ‘support for tourism development’. The term meso could be used for a second layer. A meso level of support could be directed toward a specific destination. This level is distinguished from the macro level by the specification of the destination, and/or institutions within the destination. An example of this conceptualization could be ‘I support tourism development in the village of XYZ in Australia’. The parsimonious multi-item scale developed by Boley and Strzelecka (2016) reflects the meso level of tourism support. It is important to distinguish between macro and meso levels because of the NIMBY effect- not in my back yard!

A micro level is the third layer in this hierarchy. At a micro level, resident support would be directed toward those individuals and agencies tasked with specific development activities for a destination. An exemplar for this form of support could be expressed as ‘I support the local council making arrangements for tourism development in village XYZ in Australia’. It is important to distinguish between levels of support because many residents could be prepared to support tourism development in general but may hedge their bets when it comes to supporting the specific actions of known individuals. Residents may be unsure whether promised benefits and assurances about costs can be delivered. Do residents trust the abilities of those in charge of tourism development to execute the ideals of tourism development effectively?

### Influence of Moderators and Situational Influences

In addition, scholars have called for expanded conceptualizations of SET models (e.g., Hadinejad et al., 2019; Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2017). For instance, Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy (2016) argue that imperialism, trust and identity are salient concepts for investigation in the developing country context. Likewise, quality of life, community attachment and affective assessments of resident’s judgements have been suggested as

potential influencers of resident support (e.g., Gursoy et al., 2019; Hadinejad et al., 2019; Lulu et al., 2023). Furthermore, a number of scholars have suggested that the “variations in the reported strengths of relationships between dimensions of perceived impacts and residents’ support” for tourism require the consideration of moderating influences (Gursoy et al., 2019, p.316).

In summary, we have developed a framework, from our synthesis of the literature, that can assist researchers to demonstrate their contribution to the field of costs/benefits approaches to resident support for tourism studies more effectively. Where key elements to describe contextual factors are used, there should be common anchors between studies. Furthermore, the explicit delineation of the term resident support from a set of options will enable better comparison of results between studies. Third, more robust theoretical support for proposed moderators or situational influences should be considered. We illustrate how a potential moderating factor can affect empirical results and inform theory development in the following exemplar study.

### **Conceptual Model and Hypothesis Development**

The second aim of this paper is to present an example of how a comparative framework might work in practice. We choose to do this through an examination of how a salient moderator may affect the relationship between costs/benefits and residents’ readiness to support tourism development. A number of studies have investigated the effects of moderating factors on resident support for tourism development through demographic factors (Papastathopoulos et al., 2020), level of resident interaction with tourists (Yayla et al., 2023), and community involvement (Al-sakkaf et al., 2023). For example, Papastathopoulos et al. (2020) found that residents’ perceptions of their support for tourism development was moderated by the demographic factors of gender, education, and nationality. Furthermore, Yayla et al. (2023) found that resident support for tourism initiatives increased when residents interacted more with tourists. Likewise, Al-sakkaf et al. (2023) found that, in Saudi Arabia, residents’ support for tourism development was conditional. In their study, community involvement was found to positively moderate the relationship between destination social responsibility and support for tourism development.

Personal trust has been suggested as a potential influence for gaining resident support for tourism development. Studies have shown that this form of trust is a significant driver of resident support for tourism (e.g., Cardenas et al., 2017; Nunkoo and Smith, 2013; Nunkoo et al., 2012; Nunkoo and So, 2016), when modeled as an independent variable. However, findings are mixed in terms of effect size. Modeling trust as a moderator infers a conditional effect on resident support for tourism development. While trust is a central feature of SET, Nunkoo and Smith (2013) argue that no single theory can fully explain social exchange relationships. In support, Hsu and Chen (2019) argue that attribution theory should be considered, as an adjunct to SET, to provide greater understanding of residents’ perceptions and attitudes.

Attribution theory suggests that resident behavior will be affected by social exchange processes, together with residents’ interpretation of the underlying causes of those exchange processes. More specifically, theoretical support for the moderating role of trust between perceived benefits and resident support can draw from attribution theory (Dirks and Ferrin, 2001; Ye et al., 2022). In high trust conditions, residents may



attribute the perceived positive benefits derived from tourism development to the intrinsic characteristics of the organizational entity involved in tourism development. In a low trust situation, positive benefits may be attributed to external factors or entities not directly involved in tourism development. Accordingly, relationships between perceived benefits and support for tourism development can be strengthened or weakened, depending upon the nature of the trust relationship.

For instance, residents may desire more tourism development to provide economic benefits for the community, but may be reluctant to support particular tourism agencies or individuals responsible for delivering the expected benefits. This disconnect between referents is supported by the work of Fulmer and Gelfand (2012) investigating levels of trust in social exchange relationships. An exchange relationship may exist between residents and individuals, local government agencies or national tourism institutions and broad tourism ideals. Consequently, Cropanzano et al. (2017) point out that different referents of the exchange relationship may induce different outcomes. For instance, Nunkoo and Gursoy (2016) argue that where individuals perceive government institutions to be trustworthy, support for tourism development is likely to be high. This may be more or less evident in communities where officials and leading businessmen are perceived to be acting out of personal interest. Hence, the micro form of trust in government officials appears to be a particularly salient referent to examine moderation effects. We define this specific referent group, as local government actors directly responsible for tourist development planning and implementation.

However, empirical work investigating the moderating role of trust to impact resident support for tourism development is scant. To the best of our knowledge, Zuo et al. (2017) was the first published work to empirically test ‘trust’ as a moderating factor in a study investigating the impacts of costs/benefits on resident support for ‘red’ tourism development. However, Zuo et al. (2017) did not investigate whether trust in local government actors, nor trust in central government, moderated the relationships between costs/benefits and resident support for ‘red’ tourism. In contrast, our study to investigate trust in local government actors as a moderating influence between costs/benefits and resident support for tourism development is novel to the literature.

- H1** Trust in local government actors will moderate the positive relationship between resident perceptions of greater economic, social-cultural and environmental benefits of tourism development and the readiness of community residents to support local tourism management.
- H2** Trust in local government actors will moderate the negative relationship between resident perceptions of greater economic, social-cultural and environmental costs of tourism development and the readiness of community residents to support local tourism management.

## Methodology

A cross-sectional survey using a convenience sample of local residents, from the Bo Saen community in Southern Thailand, was conducted. Convenience sampling was chosen due to the practical challenges of accessing a complete sampling frame in small rural communities, where official resident lists may be outdated or incomplete.



Additionally, small communities typically have strong social networks and regular gathering points, such as local markets, community centers, and popular public spaces. These natural congregation areas facilitate the recruitment of participants, allowing researchers to intercept residents during their daily activities in familiar and accessible settings. Given the relatively small population of about 7,000 in Bo Saen and a dispersed settlement pattern, across villages connected by canals (Bo Saen Subdistrict Administrative Organization, 2021), probability-based sampling would have been logistically challenging. Thus, convenience sampling provided a feasible, and efficient, approach to collecting data while ensuring adequate community representation.

The Bo Saen community comprises eight villages. Forty residents from each village were invited to participate in the survey. This sampling approach provided 236 usable responses which exceeds requirements for using ordinary least square (OLS) regression analysis (DeVellis, 2012). A hard copy of the questionnaire using Thai language was administered in-person to each respondent. Questions were translated from Thai to English and then back translations ensured that meanings for survey questions were consistent (Brislin, 1970).

Measures for the six independent variables were drawn from the study reported by Cardenas et al. (2017). Five point Likert type scales anchored with strongly disagree as 1 and strongly agree as 5 were used. The six independent variables were labeled: Positive economic impact, Negative economic impact, Positive social impact, Negative social impact, Positive environmental impact, and Negative environmental impact. A draft of the questionnaire was pre-tested with 10 local Thais to ensure that the items were easy to understand. Minor changes to words and phrasing resulted from the pre-test. Next, a pilot test of the measurement scale resulted in 24 items being retained to measure the six independent variables in the main study. In addition, six scale items for the moderating variable of Trust in local government actors were adopted from the 12-item trustworthiness scale reported by Cardenas et al. (2017). Scales demonstrated sound psychometric properties with Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from 0.67 to 0.93. Accordingly, all scales exceeded the threshold criteria of 0.6 recommended by Hair et al. (2014).

A single item was used to measure the dependent variable of ‘residents’ support for local community management’. The Likert type scale stated ‘I am ready to support local community management to develop tourism in Bo Saen’. We depict this statement to reflect the behavioral intention of the resident to act in a certain manner. While single item scales lack the psychometric properties of multi-item scales, they are considered suitable for narrowly defined concepts (Bergkvist and Rossiter, 2007). Additional scale statements could have resulted in a more reliable measure of this construct but extra items would have been very narrowly focused on the micro level of this concept, to avoid ambiguity with other levels of the tourist support concept. The pilot test indicated that such additional statements were superfluous. For unidimensional concepts, such as support for local community management, single item scales have been shown to display the same predictive capacity as multi-item scales (e.g., Bergkvist and Rossiter, 2007; Williams and Smith, 2016). Furthermore, single item scales have been previously used to capture the concept of resident support for tourism development (e.g., Cardenas et al., 2017; Perdue et al., 1990).

SPSS version 28 was used for the data analysis. In addition to reliability checks for

scales, each scale was subjected to a factor analysis to check scale validity. As the scale items used were drawn from the work of Cardenas et al. (2017) a check on the applicability of individual scale items to a collectivistic Asian context was considered appropriate. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using SPSS for each individual scale. Eigen values ranged from 1.35 to 4.50 and explained variance ranged from 54.6% to 79.0%. Factor loadings ranged from 0.60 to 0.91. While two of the 24 factor loadings were less than a recommended cut-off of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2014), both items were considered important to the essence of the scale concept in the Thai context and retained.

Next, the six independent variables were regressed against the dependent variable of readiness of residents to support community management in tourism development. This regression equation provided the baseline information to make a subsequent comparison for any moderation effect. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is appropriate for models with multiple independent variables and a single dependent variable (Hair et al., 2014).

Once the baseline regression model was established, Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) was conducted using trust in local government actors as the moderator. The objective for this MGA analysis was to determine differences in the whole model for each group of respondents. We were less interested in the potential for interaction terms to influence a dependent variable. Accordingly, a median split of the continuous variable capturing trust responses is a suitable approach for such cases (Hair et al., 2018; Helm and Mark, 2012). In support, Hair et al. (2021, p. 157) state that “this approach offers a more complete picture of the moderator’s influence on the analysis results”. Analysis moves from a focus on the relationship between one specific interaction term and the dependent variable, to observing all model relationships for each group separately. Furthermore, this approach avoids the concern that respondents classified just above or below the median cutoff are dissimilar to other respondents in their respective groups. Studies, using MGA, focus on group differences rather than individual heterogeneity. In support, “group differences as represented by median split results are often closer to many researchers’ mental models” (Iacobucci et al., 2015, p.660).

## Results

The survey produced 236 usable questionnaires for analysis. Sixty-four percent of residents were female and 69% were married. The largest group of respondents were 36–55 years of age (39%), followed by those 55 years of age and above (31%). Reflecting the dominant characteristics of an agricultural community, 66% of respondents had a high school level of education and 36% were farmers. Over 90% of respondents had lived in the Bo Saen area for over 20 years. A summary of the respondent profile is presented in Table 2.

With six independent variables, the sample of 236 respondents overall exceeds the minimum recommended by Hair et al. (2014), as a conservative threshold. In addition, the two groups formed by a median split in the trust scale had adequate sample sizes of 121 (low trust) and 115 (high trust). A key assumption underpinning linear regression analysis is that all independent variables are independent of each other (i.e., demonstrating discriminant validity). Accordingly, a check for discriminant validity

was undertaken using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) available in SPSS. The VIF score for all constructs in the regression equations ranged from 1.1 to 1.4. These VIF scores for multi-collinearity are well below the recommended value of 3 by Hair et al. (2014). Accordingly, adequate discriminant validity was demonstrated for regression analysis. In addition, none of the correlations between variables exceeded 0.80, further affirming that multicollinearity was negligible for the regression analysis.

**Table 2: Respondent profile**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	84	35.6
Female	152	64.4
<b>Years of age</b>		
18-25	14	5.9
26-35	57	24.2
36-55	91	38.6
55 or above	74	31.4
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	63	26.7
Married	163	69.1
Separated	10	4.2
<b>Education</b>		
High school or below	155	65.7
Bachelor degree	74	31.4
Master degree or higher	7	2.9
<b>Occupation</b>		
Student	14	5.9
Government officer	13	5.5
Housewife	37	15.7
Farmer	86	36.4
Self-employed	47	19.9
Employee	26	11.0
Other	13	5.5
<b>Period of residency in area</b>		
Less than 21 years	21	8.9
21-25 years	25	10.6
26 years or more	190	80.5

A further concern for all cross-sectional studies is common method variance and whether regression coefficients may be distorted. First, we followed procedural steps in instrument design recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2012). Five steps included: assuring respondent anonymity; proximal separation of items for the measurement scales; and reducing difficulty of respondent accuracy, together with a pre-test and a pilot test. Second, we conducted the Harman's single factor statistical test, using all measurement items. The analysis showed that all items collectively explained 24.3% of

the variance for the unrotated single factor. This level of variance is well below the recommended threshold of 50%. Accordingly, this test suggests that common method variance is not a major concern for this study.

Factor analysis was conducted to check the validity of scale items, using Principal Components Analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation for each of the multi-item measurement scales. First, an inspection of the items forming the correlation matrix for each scale showed that correlations exceeded a recommended threshold of 0.3 indicating that each matrix was suitable for factor analysis (Field, 2009). Furthermore, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test statistics for all scales were above 0.7 and values for the Bartlett test of sphericity were significant at the 99 % level in all cases. All factor loadings were greater than the recommended threshold of 0.5 and communality scores were above the threshold of 0.40 (Hair et al., 2014). These scores indicate that measurement scales demonstrated convergent validity. Accordingly, all scales demonstrated sound psychometric properties and were considered suitable for regression analysis.

### Regression Analysis

Two sets of regression analyses are reported. In overall terms, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis was conducted to determine which factors significantly influence the dependent variable of readiness to support the local management for tourism development of the community. Results showed that the overall regression model was significant and explained 25 % of the variance in readiness to support local tourism management (see Table 3). A mix of economic and environmental factors were significant in the equation. Positive and negative environmental impact variables have the strongest effect on readiness to support local management. While a positive economic impact was significant the strength of the relationship was weak.

**Table 3: Regression analysis for ‘readiness to support local community management’**

Independent variables	Standardized coefficient $\beta$	t value	Sig.
Positive economic impact	0.14	2.05	0.04
Negative economic impact	0.04	0.59	0.56
Positive social impact	0.02	0.26	0.79
Negative social impact	-0.13	-1.40	0.16
Positive environmental impact	0.32	5.24	0.00
Negative environmental impact	-0.34	-3.92	0.00
<i>F</i>	14.2		
Model significance	0.00		
Adjusted $R^2$	0.25		

The second set of regression analyses focused on using trust in local government actors as a moderator. A median split of the trust responses yielded one group low in trust (mean score < 3.87) and a second group high in trust (mean score > 3.87). The mean scores for each group were 3.19 and 4.24 for the low and high trust groups respectively. The regression analysis for each group showed that different drivers affected resident readiness to support the local management at Bo Saen. First, the effect of positive economic impacts differed considerably between the two groups. In the high trust

group, positive economic impact had no influence on resident support for tourism development, whereas the opposite was the case for the low trust group. Second, positive social impact also differed considerably between the two groups. In the high trust group, social benefit had a significant influence on resident support for tourism development, but not for the low trust group. The third major variation between groups was observed for the effect of an environmental cost. While negative environmental impact remained significant for both groups, the effect was strongest for the high trust group. No observed differences between groups were observed for negative economic impact, negative social impact and positive environmental impact. Thus, both hypotheses were partially supported. This multi-group analysis is shown at Table 4.

**Table 4: Moderated regression analysis for ‘readiness to support local community management’**

Independent variables	Low trust (N=121)	t value	High trust (N=115)	t value
	Standardized coefficient $\beta$		Standardized coefficient $\beta$	
Positive economic impact	0.20*	2.13	0.01	0.09
Negative economic impact	0.11	1.18	-0.05	-0.55
Positive social impact	-0.11	-1.17	0.29**	3.06
Negative social impact	-0.18	-1.41	-0.01	-0.09
Positive environmental impact	0.36***	3.95	0.32***	3.87
Negative environmental impact	-0.24*	-2.17	-0.57***	-3.81
<i>F</i>	5.7		11.4	
Model significance	0.00		0.00	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.19		0.35	

Note: \* =  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* =  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < 0.001$

## Discussion

This study enhances the understanding of resident support for tourism development by refining cost-benefit analysis frameworks. Despite the popularity of this research stream, differences in conceptualization and measurement have led to inconsistent findings. Our proposed framework, depicted in Figure 1, addresses these gaps and offers a structured approach to advancing the field. To illustrate its practical application, we examined how trust in local government moderates resident support for tourism. Within a rural community, comprising a large segment of farmers with a long history of residence in the community, the key driver of support for tourism development was environmental impact, both positive and negative. This finding supports the views of one group of scholars, such as Liang and Hui (2016), Chen and Chen (2010) and Cardenas et al. (2017). In contrast, our findings contradict the views of Dyer et al. (2007), and Gursoy and Rutherford (2004) who argue that positive environmental impacts have no effect on resident support. However, our findings go beyond this simple comparison. In our study, environmental impacts were by far the strongest predictors of resident support overall. This suggests that rural lifestyles shape distinct attitudes toward tourism, emphasizing the need for context-specific analysis. Furthermore, while Gursoy et al. (2019) identified economic benefits as the primary driver of resident support, our study reveals that, among high-trust residents, social impacts play a greater role. Furthermore, unlike previous research that deemed negative

impacts trivial, we found negative environmental effects to be significant, reinforcing their importance in agrarian communities.

In addition, we extend the work of scholars, such as Gursoy et al. (2019), by showing that trust induces a conditional effect on the importance of an economic impact. For residents with a low level of trust in government officials, a positive economic impact plays a bigger role. In contrast, for residents with a high level of trust in government officials the economic impact factor becomes negligible. Likewise, we make a major contribution to the academic discourse on the importance of social costs/benefits. Scholars have argued that social cost is important (e.g., Caliskan and Ozer, 2021; Chen and Chen, 2010; Liang and Hui, 2016). However, our findings demonstrate that the importance of social cost was not significant, regardless of the level of trust. In contrast, for residents with a high level of trust in local officials, a social benefit plays a significant and substantial role. Our findings establish the theoretical importance of trust as a moderating influence on the relationship between drivers of resident support and resident support for tourism development.

A contribution of this study is to delineate the conceptual characteristics of trust and resident support for tourism development. Our conceptualization of trust in local government actors distinguishes this construct from interpersonal trust and political trust used in the literature. Our approach was to treat trust as a micro level construct with the inclusion of interpersonal attributes. Building on previous work (e.g., Cardenas et al., 2017; Nunkoo and Smith, 2013; Nunkoo et al., 2012; Nunkoo and So, 2016), we extended this micro-interpersonal approach to the community-based tourism segment by focusing on community leaders. In particular, this approach distinguishes trust in local leaders, likely to be well-known by residents, from institutional trust in agencies, such as a national tourism authority. In the latter case, knowledge of particular officials, specifically responsible for tourism development at a destination, is likely to be negligible.

Likewise, we extend conceptualizations of resident support for tourism development in two distinct ways. First, we treat resident support as a behavioral intention to act. Our behavioral approach distinguishes the concept of resident support from studies largely treating the term as being interchangeable or as an attitude or perception (e.g., Andereck and Vogt, 2000; Gannon et al., 2021; Schlesinger et al., 2023). In turn, we answer researchers' calls for the conflation of conceptualizations to be addressed (Wang et al., 2023). In particular, we illustrate that behavioral intentions to act by residents is a viable and conceptually distinct entity. Second, we propose that resident support can be treated as being multi-layered. In particular, we focus on the readiness of residents to support local community tourism leaders, at a nascent stage of tourism development. This approach distinguishes support for tourism in general by focusing on the capacity of leaders to deliver fair and worthwhile outcomes, that meet community expectations. Again, this conceptualization needs to match specific contexts. For instance, where a small community has largely decided that tourism development is a good thing, then attention turns to how that development should be planned and implemented. For destinations that decry further development, this approach would be meaningless.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. As a cross-sectional, self-report survey, it cannot establish causality and may be subject to social desirability bias. While quota sampling ensured the respondents

represented the Bo Saen region, the findings may not be generalizable to other rural communities. We recognize Bo Saen's unique identity as an Islamic enclave, in a predominantly Buddhist country, which may influence community identification and attitudes toward outsiders. To support meaningful comparisons, the community profile is presented in Table 1. Additionally, convenience sampling poses limitations, as residents in remote areas may have been overlooked, and seasonal variations could affect participant accessibility. To mitigate these issues, traffic intercept schedules were developed in collaboration with local officials, and a snowball sampling technique was employed to enhance inclusivity. Future research should explore whether a segmented or broad sampling approach yields better insights, especially given the heterogeneity of resident populations. Comparative studies across rural communities and longitudinal research tracking attitudes from the early stages of tourism development are recommended. Employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, along with hierarchical analysis of the three layers of resident support identified in this study, may deepen understanding. Further exploration of moderating variables such as demographics, community attachment, or income levels could also improve future models.

### **Practical Implications for Asian Business**

Practical implications are evident for policy decision-makers in emerging Asian destinations with a focus on assisting rural communities. Given the findings that positive and negative environmental impact variables strongly influence residents' readiness to support local tourism management, practical implications for businesses operating in Islamic-dominated villages in Asia are evident. For instance, to strengthen community support, businesses should showcase the positive environmental impacts of their operations. Initiatives such as restoring natural habitats, engaging in community-led conservation programs, or developing green infrastructure can serve as tangible examples of responsible tourism. Examples include organizing tree-planting campaigns with community participation, launching waste management programs with local schools, and establishing eco-tourism trails with educational signages that align with local cultural narratives. To strengthen community support, businesses should integrate community-led conservation programs that create both environmental and economic value. This can be achieved by hiring local residents as eco-guides, training them in sustainable tourism practices, and incentivizing participation in conservation efforts through profit-sharing models. Additionally, developing green infrastructure can serve as a visible commitment to responsible tourism and align with broader government sustainability goals.

The execution of government-initiated plans to develop tourism for small communities relies on the collaborative action by local officials, community volunteers, tourism development planners and tourism developers. Government planners can ensure that an inclusive approach to planning actions involves local residents in decision making. In addition, tourism developers should adopt a structured mentorship framework, pairing local leaders with experienced professionals who can provide hands-on guidance in areas such as business operations, hospitality training, and sustainable tourism marketing. In addition, tourism developers can provide a mentoring role to local leaders by showcasing how tourism development can improve residents lives.



At the same time, a lack of familiarity between stakeholders can lead to a lack of trust. Residents are more likely to be uncertain about strangers. This familiarity issue could be accentuated in religious, rural enclaves that differ substantially in social-cultural beliefs and behaviors, to that of surrounding communities. Accordingly, the more tourism developers interact with residents, officials and local leaders the more familiar they become with each other. As such, regular home visits, collaborative events such as community clean-up days, and local business partnerships can help bridge the trust gap.

Becoming more aware of the complexities of gaining resident support is a step toward achieving harmonious development. Identifying those who mistrust local officials to develop and manage tourism development is an essential part of the process to bring the whole community on board. In Asian countries, including Thailand, residents often live in separate villages within one district. If villagers lack trust in officials because of bias towards one village versus another, then resident support will be compromised. Indeed, Yodsuwan and Butcher (2012) found that tourism collaboration was strongly affected by the level of personal self-interest involved in any development proposal. Therefore, village-specific tourism committees could address localized concerns while ensuring equitable distribution of tourism benefits.

For Islamic-dominated villages, particularly in Asia, the implications of this study emphasize the importance of respecting and aligning tourism development with Islamic cultural values and practices. In Islamic-dominated villages, trust in local government and external businesses may be heavily influenced by how well the development aligns with Islamic values. Businesses should engage with local religious leaders and community representatives to ensure tourism initiatives respect Islamic customs, including modesty, prayer times, and dietary restrictions (halal food). Building trust through cultural sensitivity can enhance community support. Trust-building activities may include implementing gender-segregated tourism activities where necessary, providing designated prayer spaces in tourism facilities, and ensuring that all food offerings adhere to halal standards. Additionally, tourism enterprises should introduce Islamic financial models, such as profit-sharing or zakat contributions, to enhance social responsibility and trust within the community.

More specifically, key agencies and officials visiting Asian rural communities can use the findings to target both low and high trust groups with more informed knowledge about the factors driving support from both groups. Residents with little trust in agency and local officials need to be assured about the economic benefits. Businesses should emphasize the direct economic benefits for the local population, particularly through job creation and opportunities that align with the Islamic way of life. Providing halal-certified tourism services or creating jobs that allow for religious observances can further strengthen resident support for tourism. At the same time, local community leaders and religious figures could act as intermediaries to bridge the trust gap. These individuals often have established credibility and a deep understanding of community concerns. By promoting transparent and fair practices in tourism initiatives, they can increase the perceived benefits for the communities and raise the support for the tourism in the area. For example, leaders who facilitate inclusive discussions about the economic benefits of tourism development including job creation and improved infrastructure, may encourage participation from less trusting residents.

In contrast, in areas where trust in local government is high, businesses should work collaboratively with both government and religious authorities to maintain transparency and gain approval. Open dialogue around how tourism development will benefit the community, without compromising religious values is crucial. In particular, community leaders and religious figures can reinforce the importance of social cohesiveness and tourism-related values. Their support for tourism projects that prioritize positive social impacts, such as cultural preservation or community well-being, could further enhance residents' confidence in these initiatives. By actively engaging in promoting socially responsible tourism practices, they align with the interests of high-trust residents, emphasizing the shared benefits of tourism development. In Islamic-dominated villages, it is vital to minimize these concerns by ensuring that tourism does not disrupt the social fabric or religious practices of the community. Specific strategies, such as zoning tourist areas to protect religious spaces, promoting respectful behavior among tourists, and incorporating Islamic principles into tourism products can mitigate these risks.

### Funding

This work was supported by Phuket Rajabhat University under Grant number PKRU31/2565.

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