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RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES AND SUPPORT FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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Based on current literature, this study developed a theoretical model of residents' support for tourism, and a series of hypotheses was proposed. The model and the hypotheses of the study were tested by structural equation modeling approach from responses collected from residents of Bistoon in Iran. The findings revealed that residents ' support for tourism, is affected directly and/or indirectly by: Ecocentric Attitudes, Place Attachment, Utilization of Tourism Resource by Resident, Community Concern, Participation in Tourism Development , Social Identity, Economic Benefits, Economic costs, Social benefits, Social Costs, Environmental Benefits and Environmental Costs. An additional finding revealed that in a community which is experiencing economic problems, residents are likely to view tourism as a means of improving their economic position while underestimating the tourism development costs.

Keywords: *Residents, Tourism impacts, Social Identity, Support for Tourism Development, Iran*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

INTRODUCTION

Residents of tourism destinations have a major role in sustainable tourism development in their areas. Tourism has to be managed with the help and interest of all stakeholders in a given territory with a focus on local inhabitants. In this way, many studies have been carried out by the researchers about local community perceptions toward tourism. Many of these studies have been descriptive, a small number of researchers attempted to examine local community attitudes in a systematic manner by developing and testing theoretical models based on social exchange

theory (Jurowski et al. (1997), Gursoy and Rutherford (2004), and Perdue, Long et al. (1990)). The main premise of social exchange theory is that individuals evaluate an exchange based on the costs and benefits associated with that exchange. Hence, people will engage in an exchange if the exchange is likely to produce valued rewards, and the perceived costs do not exceed perceived rewards (Skidmore, 1975). Essentially, if residents perceive an exchange to be beneficial to their well-being, they will evaluate that exchange positively. However, if they perceive costs from an exchange, rather than benefits, they will evaluate that exchange negatively. In terms of tourism, residents who perceive benefits from tourism are likely to have more positive attitudes toward tourism development than those who do not perceive themselves as benefiting from tourism. The purpose of this study is to expand the existing models by testing a new one that was developed based on a combination of previous studies. The research objectives are to develop a theoretical model to test the direct and/or indirect causal effects of various factors on the host community's support for tourism; to examine and modify the proposed theoretical model by structural equation modeling approach; and to evaluate the effects of perceptions on the host community's support for tourism development.

MODELING RESIDENTS'ATTITUDES TOWARDS TOURISM

The theoretical model for this study is presented in figure 1. The model proposes that local community support for tourism is influenced by their perceptions of its benefits and costs including Economic Benefits, Economic Costs, Social Benefits, Social Costs, Environmental Benefits and Environmental Costs. Moreover it is suggested that these perceptions are influenced by residents' Ecocentric Attitudes, Place Attachment, Community Concern, Utilization of Tourism Resource by Resident, Social Identity and their Participation in Tourism Management.

A number of researchers who have investigated residents' attitudes toward tourism have developed models by employing social exchange theory as a theoretical framework. Perdue et al. (1990) developed a model that examined the relationships among residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, support for additional tourism development, restrictions on tourism development, and support for special tourism taxes. The study found that resident characteristics were not significantly related to positive perceptions of tourism impacts. Furthermore, the research found that perceived positive impacts of tourism positively influenced support

for tourism development and perceived negative impacts of tourism negatively influenced support for tourism development.

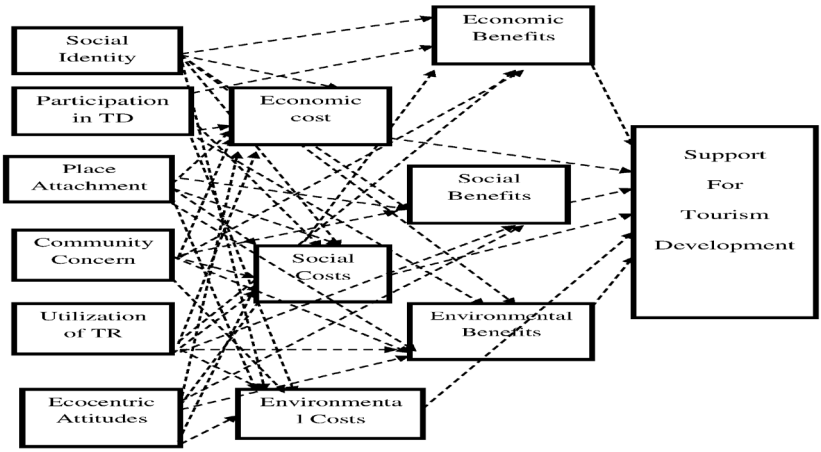

Figure 1. Initial theoritical Model of the Study

In another study, Jurowski et al. (1997) identified factors that affect the perception of impacts of tourism (economic gain, resource use, community attachment, ecocentric attitudes). By using path analysis, their research demonstrated that the perception of tourism's impact is a result of benefits and costs and that this evaluation is influenced by the elements that residents value. The model by Jurowski et al.'s(1997) model was

criticized by Gursoy et al. (2002) for its aggregation of cost and benefit impacts of tourism. Gursoy et al. (2002) modified the model by aggregating economic, social and environmental impacts, then clustering impacts as either positive or negative, regardless of the type. In addition, their model removed the exogenous variable of economic gain, added the exogenous variable of community concern, and added the variable of state of the local economy.

Gursoy and Rutherford (2004), in their study of five counties surrounding a Virginia recreation area, expanded Gursoy et al.'s (2001) model by disaggregating positively perceived benefits into economic benefits, social benefits, and cultural benefits, and perceived costs into social costs and cultural costs. As implied in social exchange theory, the variety of costs and benefits is expressed in the model by Gursoy and Rutherford (2004). However, the model does not include economic costs that can be incurred by tourism development. As some research studies have demonstrated, residents not only benefit economically from tourism, they also can be disadvantaged by costs incurred from tourism, examples of which have been identified by numerous studies. Residents may suffer from price increases for land and commodities, increased personal taxes, and stress on infrastructure (Pizam, 1978).

The model for this study is developed from a combination of the previous studies (Jurowski et al. (1997), Gursoy et al. (2002), Gursoy and Rutherford [2004], and Perdue, Long et al. (1990) with some changes. The first focus is to assess the relationships between Ecocentric Attitudes, Place Attachment, Community Concern, Utilization of Tourism Resource by Resident, Social Identity, participation in management (exogenous variables) and Perceived economic, social and environmental benefits and costs (endogenous variables). At second, relationship between endogenous variables with ultimate endogenous construct, which is support for tourism development, is examined.

Previous studies showed that the level of ecocentric attitudes significantly affects resident's reaction and their perceptions of tourism impacts (Jurowski et al 1997). Jurowski et al (1997) in their study resulted that there is a negative relationship between ecocentric attitudes of locals and three impact variables including perceived economic impact, perceived social impact, and perceived environmental impact. Generally, previous studies showed that residents who hold ecocentric beliefs and attitudes more strongly believe that there are costs resulting from tourism than those who do not hold strong ecocentric attitudes (Gursoy et al., 2002). For this study, the following hypotheses were formulated based on the preceding discussion:H1a. There is a positive relationship between

ecocentric attitudes of residents and perceptions of economic benefits.H1b: There is a negative relationship between ecocentric attitudes of residents and perceptions of economic costs.H1c. There is a positive relationship between ecocentric attitudes of residents and perceptions of social benefits.H1d. There is a negative relationship between ecocentric attitudes of residents and perceptions of social costs.H1e. There is a positive relationship between ecocentric attitudes of residents and perceptions of environmental benefits.H1f. There is a negative relationship between ecocentric attitudes of residents and perceptions of environmental costs.

"Place attachment" is an affectionate bond between people and their tourist destinations and it is always based on emotional feeling of travelers (Hummon, 1992; Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001). Prior researches indicated that residents' feeling toward their place of living has an effect on their support of cooperation with tourism development (McCool and Martin, 1994; Um and Crompton, 1987).Jurowski et al found out that attached residents are likely to form positive perceptions of the economic and social impacts. Lankford and Howard (1994) and Gursoy et al (2002) could not find a clear connection between attachment and perceptions of the impacts. However, in another study they indicated that community attachment was positively related to economic benefits and social benefits of tourism Gursoy et al (2004). McCool and Martin (1994) reported that a greater sense of belonging to a community is highly correlated with higher ratings of positive and negative impacts. Based on these previous studies, the following hypotheses were formulated:H2a. There is a positive relationship between place attachment of residents and perceptions of economic benefits.H2b. There is a negative relationship between place attachment of residents and perceptions of economic costs.H2c. There is a positive relationship between place attachment of residents and perceptions of social benefits.H2d. There is a negative relationship between place attachment of residents and perceptions of social costs.H2e. There is a positive relationship between place attachment of residents and perceptions of environmental benefits.H2f. There is a negative relationship between place attachment of residents and perceptions of environmental costs.

Previous research indicated that residents might have positive or negative attitudes on tourism based on the fact that how they perceive utilization of recreation resources. It is about the importance residents place on the use of the tourism resource" (Jurowski et al., 1997, p5). Kendall and Var (1984) and Allen et al (1993) resulted in their study that

people who utilize the resource base view impacts positively because it improves leisure facilities and opportunities for the host community. Others researchers reported that residents who utilize the resource base view impacts negatively due to the belief that tourism may result in crowding the local population out of traditional leisure pursuits (O'Leary 1976). Jurowski et al (1997) indicated a positive influence on the perceived economic, social, and environmental impacts. In general, Studies on utilization of tourism resources showed that it improves entertainment and recreational opportunities for the residents (Jurowski et al 1997). Therefore, the utilization of resource by residents is likely to have a positive relationship with tourism perceived benefits in terms of economic, social and environmental and a negative relationship with perceived aspects of tourism costs. Based on these previous studies, the following hypotheses were formulated: H3a. There is a positive relationship between utilization of tourism resource of residents and perceptions of economic benefits.H3b. There is a negative relationship between utilization of tourism resource of residents and perceptions of economic costs.H3c. There is a positive relationship between utilization of tourism resource of residents and perceptions of social benefits.H3d. There is a negative relationship between utilization of tourism resource of residents and perceptions of social costs.H3e. There is a positive relationship between utilization of tourism resource of residents and perceptions of environmental benefits.H3f. There is a negative relationship between utilization of tourism resource of residents and perceptions of environmental costs.

Previous studies indicated that community concern is likely to influence the perception of the costs and benefits of tourism development (Perdue and Kieselbach 1988; Perdue, Long and Allen 1990). The researchers suggested that people with higher levels of concern about their community are likely to also be more concerned with the impacts of tourism; in other word, it is likely to influence residents' perception of tourism impacts. Based on these propositions, the following hypotheses were developed: H4a. There is a positive relationship between community concern of residents and perceptions of economic benefits.H4b. There is a negative relationship between community concern of residents and perceptions of economic costs. H4c. There is a positive relationship between community concern of residents and perceptions of social benefits.H4d. There is a negative relationship between community concern of residents and perceptions of social costs. H4e. There is a positive relationship between community concern of residents and perceptions of environmental benefits.H4f. There is a negative

relationship between community concern of residents and perceptions of environmental costs.

Two variables, participation in tourism development and social identity are mentioned particularly in the framework of this study. Peoples' participation has been recognized as a resulting component of the social exchange theory in tourism (Madrigal, 1993, p. 338). Participation or involvement within a community is determined by access to resources (e.g., economic), position held in a community (e.g., officer), and skills. Balance of power exists when people's ability to personally influence decisions is perceived as equitable (Emerson, 1962). So far, results suggesting relationship between participation and residents' perceptions of tourism impacts have been mixed. While participation was found to be the strongest predictor of residents' perceptions in the study conducted by Madrigal (1993), Kayat (2002) found it to have an indirect influence on residents' perceptions of tourism impacts. For the purpose of this study, participation is operationalized as level of personal influence on decisions related to tourism development and secondly, level of involvement in tourism development. Participation in tourism development by residents is likely to have a positive relationship with tourism perceived benefits in terms of economic, social and environmental and a negative relationship with perceived aspects of tourism costs. Therefore, on the bases of these propositions, the following hypotheses were formulated:H5a. There is a positive relationship between participation in tourism development by residents and perceptions of economic benefits.H5b. There is a negative relationship between participation in tourism development by residents and perceptions of economic costs.H5c. There is a positive relationship between participation in tourism development by residents and perceptions of social benefits.H5d. There is a negative relationship between participation in tourism development by residents and perceptions of social costs.H5e. There is a positive relationship between participation in tourism development by residents and perceptions of environmental benefits.H5f. There is a negative relationship between participation in tourism development by residents and perceptions of environmental costs.

Social identity is the individuals' knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of the group membership (Tajfel, 1972). The essential meaning here is that people gravitate towards groups that can provide an outlet for deeply held beliefs or interests. In order to understand the theory of social identity it is first instructive to understand the fundamental principles of

personal identity. Deaux (2000) explains that each person has his or her own set of values that constitute a personal identity. For example, a person could have high national values and, in turn, visit heritage destinations in his country to fulfill that identification. Similarly, a person could have his religious values and attend mosque to fulfill his religious identification. Researches indicate that social identity may have broad impacts on person's actions. Terry (1999), remark that social identity and subsequent social categorization provoke all social perception, motivation, and behavior. Later He followed up to specify that social identities can be either demographic or self ascribed. For instance, a person could choose to join a group that admits only members of a particular race or that same person could join a group that strikes a particular chord with an interest or hobby. Social identity can be appropriated as a resource by the tourism sector, tourism needs to be understood in terms of cultures, created by the collision of local community realities and general situation of the society, which could lead to improve and develop community involvement in tourism development (Burns and Noveli, 2006).

Social identity has been referred to as a development over a long period of time that formed through individual perception of the world. This pheromone represented itself through conceptions, collection of memories and ideas. The national values and heritages are recognized by people as a significant integral component of self identify. Therefore, people's emotional relationship with their national values and cultural heritages are represented by social identity. Based on their value of social, national and even religious identification, people have various behaviors and attitudes about their cultural heritage and therefore toward tourism development (Burns and Noveli, 2006).

This reflects the fact that having successful tourism development completely depends on community support and interests. Hence, an important source of determining tourism development and its sustainability is to possess the information about their social identifications and it is important to study its effects on residents' perceptions and support for tourism. It could be predicted that if residents have a high level of perception about social identity they are likely to evaluate the benefits more positively and minimize the negative impacts. Therefore, the level of social identity perceived by residents is likely to have a positive relationship with tourism perceived benefits in terms of economic, social and environmental and a negative relationship with perceived aspects of tourism costs. In this way, on the bases of these propositions, the following hypotheses were formulated:H6a. There is a

positive relationship between social identity of residents and perceptions of economic benefits.H6b. There is a negative relationship between social identity of residents and perceptions of economic costs.H6c. There is a positive relationship between social identity of residents and perceptions of social benefits.H6d. There is a negative relationship between social identity of residents and perceptions of social costs.H6e. There is a positive relationship between social identity of residents and perceptions of environmental benefits.H6f. There is a negative relationship between social identity of residents and perceptions of environmental costs.

With regard to negative aspects of tourism impacts, In Gursoy and Rutherford's (2004) model, the costs of tourism development include social and cultural. Economic costs are not considered, while in previous research, price increases for land and commodities, increased personal taxes, and stress on infrastructure are depicted as economic costs that tourism can incur (Pizam, 1978). The economic costs variable is used as one of the components (latent variable) of negative impacts of tourism that was examined in a study by Sanchez et al. (2009). They examined the relationship between attitudes toward additional tourism development, positive perceptions of tourism impacts, and negative perceptions of tourism impacts. In the Jurowski et al. (1997) study, which tested the relationship between determinants of residents' attitudes toward tourism (economic gain, resource use, community attachment, ecocentirc attitude) and perceived economic impact, they recognized that their questionnaires for economic impact items included both economic benefits and economic costs. In this study, by categorizing the tourism impacts into six variables including Economic Benefits, Economic costs, Social benefits, Social Costs, Environmental Benefits and Environmental Costs, all aspects of tourism negative impacts such as economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects are considered in measurement scales.

Second set of hypotheses, examined the relationship between the endogenous variables including Economic Benefits, Economic costs, Social benefits, Social Costs, Environmental Benefits and Environmental Costs and the ultimate endogenous construct of support for tourism development. Based on social exchange theory it could be expected that residents with positive perceptions toward tourism benefits are likely to show more support for tourism development and conversely, perceived costs of tourism would lead to lower support. Therefore, the following hypotheses were formulated: H7a. There is a positive relationship between residents' perceptions of economic benefits and support for tourism development.H7b. There is a negative relationship between

residents' perceptions of economic costs and support for tourism development.H7c. There is a positive relationship between residents 'perceptions of social benefits and support for tourism development.H7d. There is a negative relationship between residents 'perceptions of social costs and support for tourism development.H7e. There is a positive relationship between residents 'perceptions of environmental benefits and support for tourism development.H7f. There is a negative relationship between residents 'perceptions of environmental costs and support for tourism development.

STUDY AREA

The city of Bisotun is located in Western Iran, in Kermanshah province. 4000 people inhabit the city during fall and winter (Kermanshah province report, 2010); however, the number escalates in spring and summer because of desirable weather and more job opportunities especially in the tourism sector. Now, they are more than 950 families living in the city. The economy of families is depended to farms, tourism and some industrial factories around the city. Considering the unique heritage attraction, which the city possesses, government is planning to help the economy of the region by developing tourism sector. Besides the attracting sights, rivers and springs, Bisotun is full of archaeological objects and monuments from different periods of Iranian history. Its primary monument is the Bisotun Inscription, made in 521 BC by Darius the Great when he conquered the Persian throne. The inscription is written in three languages: Elamite, Babylonian and Old Persian (UNESCO, 2006). It represents the victory of Darius the Great over Gaumata and the nine rebellious kings. Bisotun is protected under the list of the National Cultural and Natural Heritage Organization of Iran and besides that, it was registered in UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites in a decision made by UNESCO World Heritage Committee and announced 13th of July 2006 (Safaei, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

The proposed model and hypothesized paths were tested on the survey data collected from the residents of Bistoon during the spring of 2012. The measurement and structural models were tested using the LISREL 8.72 structural equation analysis package (Joreskog and Sorbom, 2004).Minimum sample requirement for effective use of structural equation modeling is 200 (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). As a result, the

model and fit indices are relatively and consistently stable at a sample size of 200 or greater. However, for having a more appropriate estimation in proposed structural model proposed in this study, a sample size of 500 was aimed. The self-administrated questionnaire was hand delivered by the researcher to the randomly selected households in Bistoon. Households were selected using systematic sampling with a random starting point. The number of 545 filled surveys was collected after the survey distribution (the response rate was 72 percent).The fit of the measurement and structural models was determined by examining chi-square statistics, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI; Joreskog and Sorbom 1989), the non-normed-fit index (NNFI; Hu and Bentler 1995), the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler 1990), the incremental Fit Index (IFI; Mulaik James, Alstine, Bennett, Lind and Stilwell 1989). Values of GFI, IFI, CFI and NNFI range from 0 to 1.00 with a value close to 1.00 indicating good fit (Mulaik et al 1989).To measure the parsimony of the model: parsimony goodness of fit index (PGFI) and parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) were used. Values of PGFI and PNFI range from 0 to 1.00 with a value above .70 indicating a good fit (a parsimonious model) (GFI; Joreskog and Sorbom 1989).

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the measurement model specifying the posited relations of the observed variables to the underlying constructs. Composite reliability refers to a measure of the internal consistency of indicators to the construct, depicting the degree to which they indicate the corresponding latent construct (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). A commonly used threshold value for an acceptable level of composite reliability is .70. If the composite reliability is above .70, the indicators for the latent construct are reliable and are measuring the same construct. As a complementary measure of the composite reliability, the variance extracted can be calculated to explain the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by the corresponding latent construct. A commonly used acceptable cut-off point is .50. If the variance extracted values are high, the indicators are truly representative of the latent construct. Based on the result of squared multiple correlations (Indicator Reliability), some of indicators were deleted because of low indicator reliability and relatively less important variables as indicators of the particular constructs. By this modification, as indicated in Table 1and 2, the composite reliability scores for all the constructs exceeded the recommended level of 0.70. Moreover, the variance extracted estimate for each construct meets the desirable level of 50% or higher (Joreskog and

Sorbom, 1989); measurement scales properties are included in the same tables.

In an overall measurement model, the adequacy of the individual items and the composites are assessed by measures of reliability and validity. A value of higher than 0.70 is acceptable for a composite reliability. As shown in Table 1and 2, the composite reliability scores of all constructs were above 0.70. For validity of the measures, face and convergent validity were examined and approved. The review of the goodness-of-fit indices for the overall measurement model revealed that the model was well fitted to the data . As presented in Table3, the overall fit of this final measurement model was $\chi 2$ =726.64, df Difference=672, GFI =92; NNFI =.97; CFI =95, IFI =.97 and PGFI=.69; PNFI=.80. Further, the indicators of RMR (root mean square residual), and RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) were .04, .03.

In testing the proposed hypotheses for this study, an initial theoretical structural model was examined with six exogenous constructs including Social Identity, participation in management, Place Attachment, Community Concern, Utilization of Tourism Resource by Resident, Ecocentric Attitudes and six endogenous variables including Economic Benefits, Economic costs, Social benefits, Social Costs, Environmental Benefits and Environmental Costs and one ultimate endogenous construct which is support for tourism development. As explained in the measurement modeling, some of initial indicators for the constructs were deleted by the modification process to reach the overall measurement fit. Therefore, finally 20 indicators for exogenous constructs, 14 indicators for endogenous constructs and 5 indicators for ultimate endogenous construct were used to test the model of the study. In order to find out what is the best model in this study, a series of five nested structural models were examined by using a two-step approach.

A nested model is nested within another model where the first set of freely estimated parameters is a subset of those estimated in another model. The first model as showed in the next table is the null structural sub model (Mn) in which all parameters relating the constructs to one another are fixed at zero. The second model is the theoretical model (Mt) as proposed initially. From a theoretical perspective, the constrained model (Mc) is the next most likely model. It is similar to the theoretical model (Mt) except that one or more parameters estimated in Mt are fixed at zero. In the constrained model, 22 of the 42 proposed paths (parameters) were fixed at zero. The result of the model development process suggested that adding new paths would improve the model fit.

Based on the recommendations of modification indices, additional paths were added to the model.

Table1. Measurement Scale Properties

Constructs and Indicators	Completely Standardized Loadings	Indicator Reliability	Error Variance
Place Attachment		.86	
I am very attached to my place of living.	.76	.54	.41
This town makes me feel like no other place can	.81	.48	.33
If it was possible, I would rather spend more time in my town.	.94	.43	.27
Social Identity		.56	
I am glad to belong to this society.	.79	.42	.37
There are national roots which unite people in my society.	.78	.63	.45
I know about the history of my area of living.	.82	.76	.27
I feel proud of the history of my area of living.	.72	.82	.36
I believe national heritage of my country should be preserved and advertised to the world	.92	.86	.48
Ecocentric Attitudes		.76	
The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset.	.56	.40	.43
Humans are severely abusing the environment.	.79	.42	.49
Utilization of tourism resource		.87	
I usually visit the heritage in my free time	.85	.54	.23
I usually visit the attractive scenic, rivers and springs of Bistoon in my free time	.92	.63	.34

Community concern		.86	
I am concerned about the local community problems	.87	.64	.21
Economy is an important concern of my community	.83	.72	.36
Roads and streets are not in a good condition in Bistoon	.92	.61	.12
Lack of appropriate communication facilities like telephone lines is a problem in Bistoon	.93	.49	.26
Participation in tourism		.79	
What level of involvement have you had in tourism development in Bistoon?	.74	.64	.45
What level of interest do you currently have about tourism development in Bistoon?	.79	.62	.38
In the future, how willing are you to be involved in tourism development in Bistoon?	.82	.49	.39
Economic Benefits		.88	
Tourism provides job opportunities for local residents.	.82	.79	.35
Increasing the number of tourists visiting the area improves local economy.	.79	.84	.29
Tourism contributes to higher income for residents.	.82	.80	.43
Economic Costs		.81	
Profits generated by tourism activity end up with companies and persons from outside Bistoon.	.90	.68	.41
Tourism increases the prices of products and services in the area.	77	.58	.42
Environmental Costs		.79	
Tourism has resulted in traffic congestion, noise or pollution.	.82	.59	.37

Tourism destroys the natural environment.	.93	.53	.29

Table 2. Measurement Scale Properties

Constructs and indicators	Completely Standardized Loadings	Indicator Reliability	Error Variance
Environmental Benefits		.79	
Tourism provides incentive for protection and conservation of heritage in the area.	.86	.63	.34
Roads and public places are kept in a better way by tourism development	.81	.58	.29
Social Costs		.76	
Tourism has negatively affected our culture.	.70	.53	.38
Tourists negatively affect residents' way of living.	.76	.55	.45
Social Benefits		.80	
Recreational opportunities for local residents could be increased by tourism development.	.81	.67	.43
Tourism increases interactions between tourists and residents	.78	.65	.38
Tourism development provides cultural activities for residents in Bistoon	.79	.59	.29
Support for Tourism Development		.74	
I support new tourism development in my community	.82	.74	.34
Tourism authorities should try to attract more tourists.	.92	.70	.29
There should be a focus on providing more tourism related job opportunities for	.93	.68	.38

locals.			
Tourism authorities should consult residents in tourism development projects.	.89	.76	.45
Local government and agencies should work as facilitators for tourism development in Bistoon.	.84	.59	.43

Table 3. Goodness-of-fit Indices for the Overall Measurement Model

Measures	Goodness-of-Fit Statistics
Chi-square	726.64 with 672 degrees of freedom ($p < .05$)
Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)	.92
Root mean square residual (RMR)	.04
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	.03
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI)	.96
Non-normed fit index (NNFI)	.97
Normed fit index (NFI)	.96
Parsimony goodness-of-fit index(PGFI)	.69
Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI)	.80
Comparative fit index (CFI)	.95
Incremental fit index (IFI)	.97
Relative fit index (RFI)	.91

These two paths included one additional path from social identity to support for tourism development and one from ecocentric attitudes to support for tourism development for estimation. The next most likely model, from a theoretical perspective, is the unconstrained alternative model (Mu) in which one or more parameters constrained in Mt are estimated. In the unconstrained model, all paths proposed in the theoretical model were estimated. The saturated model (Ms) estimates all parameters relating the constructs to one another. This model is formally equivalent to the confirmatory measurement model.

Table 4. Fit Indices of all Five Nested Models

Models Tested	χ2	d.f.	GFI	RMR	RMSE	CFI	NFI	NNFI	PNFI
Null Model	845.81	739							
Theoretical Model	744.62	679	.91	.04	.04	.95	.96	.97	.81
Unconstrained Model	732.76	677	.92	.04	.03	.95	.96	.97	.81
Constrained Model	742.63	683	.91	.04	.03	.95	.96	.97	.82
Saturated Model	726.64	672	.92	.04	.03	.95	.96	.97	.80

After assessing five nested structural models, sequential chi-square difference tests were conducted to provide successive fit information (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). As presented in table 4, the sequential chi-square difference test results indicated that there was a significant difference in chi-square value between the theoretical model (Mt) and the saturated model (Ms), which has the smallest value of any structural model at the .05 probability level (Mt_Ms $\chi 2$ difference =17.98; df Difference = 7).It means that that the theoretical model (Mt) was "ill-fitted" in comparison with the saturated model (Ms). On the other hand, both the constrained (Mc) (Mc_Ms $\chi 2$ difference=15.99; df Difference = 11, P=0.16) and the unconstrained (Mu) models' chi-square values (Mu_Ms $\chi 2$ difference =6.12; df Difference = 5, P=0.29) were not significantly different from the saturated model's chi-square value (Ms).In addition, there was no significant difference in the chi-square test result between constrained (Mc) and unconstrained (Mu) models at the .05 probability level) (Mc_Mu $\chi 2$ difference=9.87, df Difference=6 ; P=0.12). In a case of no difference in the Chi-square test, the more parsimonious model should be selected (Hull, Lehn, & Tedlie, 1995). The parsimonious normed fit index for the constrained model is .82, which, for the unconstrained model it is .81. Therefore, Even though the unconstrained model had a slightly lower (but not significantly lower) chi-square value, the constrained one was selected as the best model for this study because the constrained model is more parsimonious than the unconstrained model. The final model is presented in Figure 2.

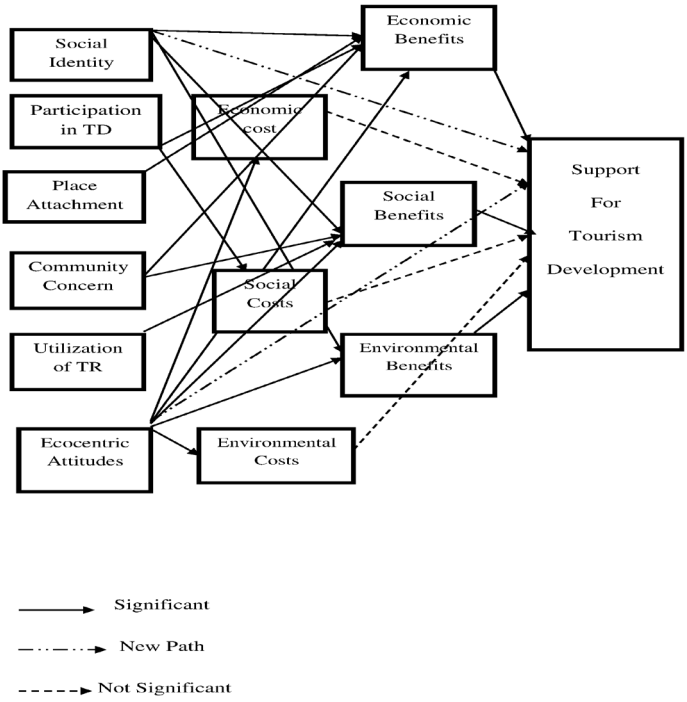

Figure 2. Modified Model of the Study

RESULTS

In this study, a total of 42 hypotheses were proposed and tested by using structural equation modeling. First set of hypothesis were about relationship between Ecocentric Attitudes, Place Attachment, Community Concern, Utilization of Tourism Resource by Resident Social Identity, participation in management (exogenous variables) and Economic Benefits, Economic costs, Social benefits, Social Costs, Environmental Benefits and Environmental Costs (endogenous variables).

Five of six hypothesis related to ecocentric Attitudes were supported and only one was not supported (H1d). Therefore, Ecocentric Attitudes is positively related to economic, social and environmental benefits and negatively related to economic and environmental costs. No relationship was found between ecocentric attitudes of residents and perceptions of social costs. The results are mostly consistent with previous studies which showed that residents with strong ecocentric attitudes have low levels of perceptions of benefits (Gursoy et al, 2004; Kaltenborn et al., 2008). Regarding place attachment, only one hypothesis (H2a) was supported that there is a positive relationship between place attachment of residents and perceptions of economic benefits. The result is consistent with previous study by Gursoy et al. (2004) who resulted that residents' attachment to their area of living is significantly related to perceived economic benefits of tourism.

Only one hypothesis related to utilization of tourism resource was supported (H3a); that there is a positive relationship between utilization of tourism resource of residents and perceptions of economic benefits. A Possible explanation for a not significant relationship between utilization and tourism costs is that residents may have developed and adopted coping mechanism to avoid competition with tourists for recreational resources (Bryant and Napier 1981). With regard to community concern, only 2 hypothesis were supported (H4a, H4c); positive relationship with economic benefit and social benefit. 2 hypotheses were supported related to participation in tourism (H5a, H5d); a positive relationship with economic benefit and negative relationship with social costs were supported. These results could demonstrate the importance of economic benefits which local community takes into the consideration toward tourism. Three hypothesis related to social identity were supported (H6a, H6c, H6e). Therefore, positive relationship with economic, social and environmental benefits was supported while no significant relationship was found with cost items. In addition, two new paths from ecocentric

attitudes and social identity to support for tourism were found to be significant in this study. These new paths indicated that the ecocentric attitudes and social identity affect residents' support for tourism by influencing their perception of cost and/or benefits of development. Besides, they directly affect their support for tourism development. These new paths were added based on the examination of modification indices.

Second set of hypotheses, examined the relationship between the endogenous variables (tourism impacts) including Economic Benefits, Economic costs, Social benefits, Social Costs, Environmental Benefits and Environmental Costs and the ultimate endogenous construct of Support for Tourism Development.Three hypothesis related to tourism impacts were supported (H7a, H7c, H7e). Therefore, support for tourism is positively related to Economic Benefits, Social benefits and Environmental Benefits, while no significant relationship was found with cost items. The finding of this study that there is no negative relationship between tourism costs and support supports is consistent with Gursoy et al's findings (2002). Insignificant relations between tourism costs and support for tourism development may be explained by the economic conditions of the community where the study was conducted. Communities of this study have been experiencing economic downturns due to current economic situation in the country and very high inflation rate in recent year, for example, the central bank of Iran revealed an inflation rate of 21.5 percent in the Iranian year that ended March 19. Sanctions, which are imposed to deter the country from developing its nuclear program, lead the people to worry about the price of basic foodstuffs. Many problems happened about the exporting the oil which is the major source of income for the government. Ordinary Iranian people are already feeling the pain of western sanctions against Iran. Inflation is soaring against a background of increasing unemployment. The Rial has plummeted in value and price of imported products has been increased severely. Evidence suggests that in communities experiencing economic problems, residents are likely to view tourism as a means of improving their economic position (Allen et al 1993; Keogh 1990) while underestimating the tourism development costs (Akis et al 1996). In such a situation, Local people are likely to place more importance on important gains than any other impacts (Akis et al 1996; Husband 1989). Because of the significant emphasis placed on economic gains, residents may underestimate the tourism costs in their community.

CONCLUSION

Local community support for tourism is a complex issue for the tourism planners who are seeking to develop or increase tourism in destinations. Results of this study suggest that tourism managers should study perceptions and ideas of local communities before they develop tourism projects to gain results that are more successful. In this way, findings of this study could be useful for tourism planners, government authorities or tourism business managers to understand the important factors affecting residents' support for tourism development and implement successful plans accordingly.It was found out in this study that six factors are likely to influence residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their support for tourism development: Ecocentric Attitudes, Place Attachment, Utilization of Tourism Resource by Resident, Community Concern, Participation in Tourism Development and Social Identity. It is suggested that before trying to develop tourism in destinations, tourism managers and planners should collect information about level of residents' attachment to their area of living, those concerned about community issues, those with strong environmental attitudes, those currently using the resource to be developed, those participating in tourism development in their area and finally social identity of the community. When these groups are identified, tourism managers and planners can develop appropriate strategies to address the issues asked by each category.

This study found that if residents have economic concerns and believe that the economic situation needs to be improved, they are more likely to support tourism. The results showed that local community hopes to gain economic benefits toward tourism development and therefore they are interested in more tourism. They like to be involved in the exchange process because of the desired economic potential they see in tourism, however the big interest on the positive impacts of tourism lead to interesting result in this study and that is the negative aspects of tourism do not decrease the residents' support for tourism development among residents.In this way, if residents have a strong perception of economic benefits, this is likely to influence their attitudes on the effects of negative impacts of tourism. Local residents are likely to place more importance on economic gain and the significant emphasis placed on such benefits could lead to underestimate the tourism costs in their community. In other words, sometimes the dominant perceived impact is likely to influence the perception of other impacts and residents show a strong support for tourism development despite the existence of negative impacts.

Understanding the economic needs and priorities of the local communities could help tourism developers to provide more appropriate plans for tourism and it may contribute to creating and integrating value added tourism resources to achieve greater economic benefits. By identifying the group of local people who desire economic development of the society or interested in economic aspects of tourism, tourism planner could try to convince other parts of the society about the importance of tourism development by advertising the positive impacts of tourism in the society.

Results showed that those residents who expressed a high level of attachment to their social identity are more likely to see tourism as being beneficial from different aspects. These local people are interested in national values and could likely be marketed and directed as supporters of the correct kind of tourism development in their area of living. Interest in national identity by residents in this study, had lead to more support for tourism. One possible reason is that the cultural heritage is a unique symbol of national integrity, which could gather Iranians from different parts of the country in Bistoon and provide a prideful vision among international tourists. This could be important for the development of sites and with regard to the local community perceptions toward interaction with tourists, could lead to a welcoming atmosphere that promotes success of the tourism development on a sustainable basis.

This study also found out that both positive and negative impacts of tourism should be studied to have a better insight about residents' perceptions toward tourism development. The majority of residents are interested and looking for economic benefits of tourism, meanwhile others were concerned about other aspects of positive or negative impacts. For example, residents who are concerned about community issues were concerned about economic and social benefits; while those with high ecocentric attitudes were also worried about both environmental and economic costs. Tourism managers and planners can apply these findings in order to design strategies that are related to special needs of each group of residents. It can lead to achieve a higher level of local community support for tourism and provide more successful and sustainable tourism development in the community.

Residents in Bistoon strongly support tourism development in the area, however, local community perceived that their involvement and views are not taken into consideration by the tourism authorities in the decision making process of developing and managing tourism. Evidence of this can be seen in responses to the survey’s open-ended questions. One resident expressed concern about the fact, saying, "Residents are not asked about their agreement or disagreement toward tourism, every time a

story about a problem heats up in public; however residents feel like no participation in decisions". This distrust could be improved by having more open dialog between tourism authorities and local residents. Local people also believe that marketing and promotion of the area have not been carefully handled. For example, the promotion and advertisement for attracting tourists during low season like winter is inadequate.

The participation of local community is expected since local community will be directly affected by a project or a decision, which warrants them to have an active role and influence in the process of decision making and planning. Moreover, their involvement would not only ensure that they would benefit economically but also create a commitment to the preservation and conservation of Bistoon as a world heritage site. Community participation would also be capable of providing input in the formulation of tourism policies, which would ensure the extent of development or rate of change, which is consistent with local desires and in maintaining visitors' interest towards the unique heritage attributes of Bistoon. Resident's involvement also empowers the community to determine the direction of their social development encourages individual, family and community growth and is considered as a powerful tool for economic development of the community.

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