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Measuring the Intrapersonal Component of Psychological Empowerment toward Local Tourism Development

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Abstract

To maximize the positive impacts on communities while minimizing the negative ones, it is essential that future tourism development actions be guided by thoughtful and effective policies that represent the interests of the majority of community members. Effective policies depend upon the support of an engaged citizenry, and engaged citizenship requires residents who feel psychologically empowered. The primary purpose of this study is to develop a topic-specific measure of sociopolitical control (SPC) in order to provide a valid and reliable quantitative tool for evaluating successful outcomes of tourism development in host communities. Confirmatory factor analysis results provide support for construct validity of the revised tourism SPC scale (SPCS-T). The present study contributes to the tourism field by providing empirical evidence that the SPCS-T scale can be used by policymakers and researchers to evaluate tourism policy outcomes.

Introduction

The main reason for such an emphasis is that the success of tourism development relies extensively on a close relationship with host communities. Citizens' active participation in tourism development policies and decisions is critical because without local level infrastructure, enthusiasm and hospitality, the tourism system is incomplete. In addition, effective and efficient tourism development attempts to achieve economic enhancement, cultural and historic preservation, and environmental protection in host communities. Citizen participation and empowerment play a significant role in achieving these three goals by minimizing conflict between host communities and tourism development and satisfying tourist demands (Liu, 2003; Pérez & Nadal, 2005). Not only can citizens in host communities articulate shared values that can be sustained to protect their communities, but they can also actively express their voices, experiences, and knowledge to tourism developers when they voluntarily engage and are empowered. Citizen participation derives from various sources, beginning with awareness of tourism development policies. Empowered citizens are likely to contribute to the development of creative ideas and have an effect on local-level tourism development (Beeton, 2005).

Tourism scholars have taken interest in the topic of empowerment of host communities, but the studies have solely focused on communities' economic or political empowerment (Cole, 2006;

Scheyvens, 1999). Studies have investigated community empowerment indirectly as a component of residents' attitudes, participatory activities, or involvement towards tourism development, but they have not directly measured level of empowerment at the individual level (Manyara & Johnes, 2007; Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Simpson, 2008). Zimmerman and Zahnizer (1991) developed a sphere-specific measure of individuals' psychological empowerment through their sociopolitical control scale (SPCS). In the last two decades, the SPCS has been widely employed to test the relationship between intrapersonal components of psychological empowerment and citizen participation, mostly in community psychology studies (Christens, Peterson, & Speer, 2011; Holden, Evans, Hinnant, & Messeri, 2005; Itzhaky & York, 2000, 2003; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz, & Checkoway, 1992; Zimmerman, Ramírez-Valles, & Maton, 1999). Smith and Propst (2001) found that it was possible to develop a reliable and valid, topic-specific version of the SPCS in the context of natural resource management. The primary purpose of this study is to develop a topic-specific measure of sociopolitical control as a quantitative tool for evaluating successful outcomes of tourism development in host communities. To wit, this study demonstrates the extent to which the SPCS can be modified for use in the tourism domain while maintaining psychometric rigor.

Citizen Participation in Host Communities

The literature on the importance of citizen participation in sustainable tourism planning and development is vast and growing. Community involvement has been highlighted as playing a significant role in local tourism development because local initiatives in developing tourism attractions are seen as a first preference in tourism development (Boley, Nickerson, & Bosak, 2011; Dredge, 2006; Prentice, 1993). Increasingly, studies are paying attention to host community attitudes toward tourism development such as host community reactions to the impact of tourism (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; Zhang, Inbakaran, & Jackson, 2006), and development of community-based tourism (Blackstock, 2005; Novelli & Gebhardt, 2007; Wearing & McDonald, 2002). These studies argue that citizen participation in host communities is necessary to pursue economic benefits while simultaneously ensuring socio-cultural and environmental protection to host communities. Sustainable tourism can be an answer to achieving balance between economic outcomes and protection of host communities' environments, but the benefits must be fairly distributed to various stakeholders such as local residents, tourists, operators, and regulators (Hardy & Beeton, 2001).

It is considered important for host communities to take responsibility for their participation and engagement in tourism policy and development (Jackson & Morpeth, 1999). The stakeholders in the host communities of tourism destinations are often diverse and unintegrated. As a result, they lack a coherent voice. Citizen participation cannot only result in improved public support and comprehension of the policy-making process, but it can also address diverse stakeholders' preferences and needs. Tourism can also create networks among businesses, developers, governments, and local communities in locales with significant tourism development (Byrd, 2007). Some studies indicate that effective community-based tourism development, which is

based on such networks and community-based tourism, is derived from active citizen participation in host communities (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Okazaki, 2008; Sebele, 2010).

In order to achieve active community involvement and citizen participation, governments and development authorities should encourage host communities to take action toward policy-making activities (Keogh, 1990; Lewis & Newsome, 2003; Yankelovich, 1991). Such collaborative policy-making among government agencies, businesses, and host communities is recognized as a critical feature of sustainable tourism development (Buckley, Pickering, & Weaver, 2003). This is because community involvement allows governments and tourism developers to understand local norms and values that are necessary to be addressed through collaborative planning (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Stimulating community involvement and collaboration among stakeholders results in three beneficial outcomes: 1) community ownership; 2) accessibility of planning or management resources; and 3) maintaining a broad stakeholder base by involving local NGOs (Yates, Stein, & Wyman, 2010). Conflict avoidance or minimization is another highly touted goal of collaborative planning (Phi, Dredge, & Whitford, 2014).

To conclude, tourism research in the last few decades has witnessed the strong role of citizen participation in tourism development. Parallel to tourism research findings, community psychologists have claimed that psychologically empowered communities and citizens exert influence on their external sociopolitical circumstances and also act to improve their environments (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Rapport, 1984; Zimmerman, et al., 1992). As such, psychological empowerment of citizens is an indicator of the success of citizen participation in host communities in policy-making processes, including tourism development.

Table 1. Measurement Model Construct Definitions

Construct	Definition	Relevant Literature
Sociopolitical Control Scale for Tourism	Individuals' belief about their abilities and efficacy in social and political circumstances concerning tourism development	Itzhaky & York, 2001; Smith & Propst, 2001; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991;
Leadership Competence	Individuals' skills that may include organizing others for common goals and expressing their voices in front of others or groups	Peterson et al., 2006; Smith & Propst, 2001; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991;
Tourism Policy Control	A sense of control over one's political influence in tourism development	Holden, Evans, Hinnant, & Messeri, 2005; Smith & Propst, 2001; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991

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