

# Mladá veda

## Young Science



# Mladá veda

## Young Science

### MEDZINÁRODNÝ VEDECKÝ ČASOPIS MLADÁ VEDA / YOUNG SCIENCE

Číslo 3, ročník 14., vydané v júni 2026

ISSN 1339-3189, EV 167/23/EPP

Kontakt: [info@mladaveda.sk](mailto:info@mladaveda.sk), tel.: +421 908 546 716, [www.mladaveda.sk](http://www.mladaveda.sk)

Fotografia na obálke: Ostrov Mull, Škótska vysočina. © Branislav A. Švorc, [foto.branisko.at](http://foto.branisko.at)

#### REDAKČNÁ RADA

*prof. Ing. Peter Adamišín, PhD.* (Katedra environmentálneho manažmentu, Prešovská univerzita, Prešov)

*doc. Dr. Pavel Chromý, PhD.* (Katedra sociálnej geografie a regionálneho rozvoje, Univerzita Karlova, Praha)

*prof. Dr. Paul Robert Magocsi* (Chair of Ukrainian Studies, University of Toronto; Royal Society of Canada)

*Ing. Lucia Mikušová, PhD.* (Ústav biochémie, výživy a ochrany zdravia, Slovenská technická univerzita, Bratislava)

*PhDr. Veronika Kmetóny Gazdová, PhD.* (Inštitút edukológie a sociálnej práce, Prešovská univerzita, Prešov)

*doc. Ing. Peter Skok, CSc.* (Ekomos s. r. o., Prešov)

*Mgr. Monika Šavelová, PhD.* (Katedra translitológie, Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa, Nitra)

*prof. Ing. Róbert Štefko, Ph.D.* (Katedra marketingu a medzinárodného obchodu, Prešovská univerzita, Prešov)

*prof. PhDr. Peter Švorc, CSc.*, predseda (Inštitút histórie, Prešovská univerzita, Prešov)

*doc. Ing. Petr Tománek, CSc.* (Katedra verejnej ekonomiky, Vysoká škola báňská - Technická univerzita, Ostrava)

*doc. Mgr. Michal Garaj, PhD.* (Katedra politických vied, Univerzita sv. Cyrila a Metoda, Trnava)

#### REDAKCIA

*Mgr. Branislav A. Švorc, PhD.*, šéfredaktor (Vydavateľstvo UNIVERSUM, Prešov)

*Mgr. Martin Hajduk, PhD.* (Banícke múzeum, Rožňava)

*PhDr. Magdaléna Keresztesová, PhD.* (Fakulta stredoeurópskych štúdií UKF, Nitra)

*RNDr. Richard Nikischer, Ph.D.* (Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj ČR, Praha)

*PhDr. Veronika Trstianska, PhD.* (Ústav stredoeurópskych jazykov a kultúr FSS UKF, Nitra)

*Mgr. Veronika Zuskáčová* (Geografický ústav, Masarykova univerzita, Brno)

#### VYDAVATEĽ

Vydavateľstvo UNIVERSUM, spol. s r. o.

[www.universum-eu.sk](http://www.universum-eu.sk)

Javorinská 26, 080 01 Prešov

Slovenská republika

© Mladá veda / Young Science. Akékoľvek šírenie a rozmnožovanie textu, fotografií, údajov a iných informácií je možné len s písomným povolením redakcie.

# WHAT DRIVES COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR ECOTOURISM? THE ROLE OF INVOLVEMENT AND PERCEIVED BENEFITS

ČO MOTIVUJE PODPORU KOMUNITY PRE EKOTURIZMUS? ÚLOHA ZAPOJENIA A VNÍMANÝCH PRÍNOSOV

Mrigakshi Borthakur <sup>1</sup>, Kristína Šambronská <sup>2</sup>

Mrigakshi Borthakur is a doctoral student in the Department of Management Studies, National Institute of Technology Silchar, India. Her research areas are ecotourism, sustainability, community wellbeing and tourist behavior. Kristína Šambronská works as an associate professor at the Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Faculty of Management, Economics and Business of the Prešov University. Her research focuses on the issues of travel agencies, tour guide activities, and the creation of tourist products.

Mrigakshi Borthakur je doktorandkou na Katedre manažérskych štúdií Národného technologického inštitútu Silchar v Indii. Jej výskumné oblasti sú ekoturizmus, udržateľnosť, blahobyt komunity a správanie turistov. Kristína Šambronská pôsobí ako docentka na Katedre turizmu a hotelového manažmentu Fakulty manažmentu, ekonomiky a obchodu Prešovskej univerzity. V rámci svojho výskumu sa venuje problematike cestovných kancelárií, sprievodcovskej činnosti a tvorbe turistického produktu.

## Abstract

Tourism represents one of the world's fastest-expanding industries, with ecotourism emerging since the late 1980s as a key tool for sustainable development. However, the successful implementation of ecotourism is heavily dependent on the support and acceptance of host communities. The primary objective of this study was to examine the determinants of local community support for ecotourism development through a theoretical model grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), focusing specifically on the roles of community involvement and perceived benefits. The empirical investigation was conducted in the East Khasi Hills District of Meghalaya State, India. Quantitative data were collected between October and

---

<sup>1</sup> Work Address: BTech, Mrigakshi Borthakur, MBA. (ORCID 0000-0001-7668-0514), Department of Management Studies, National Institute of Technology Silchar, NIT - Silchar, Ghungoor, Masimpur, Silcoorie Grant, Assam 788010, India

Email: mrigakshi21\_rs@mba.nits.ac.in

<sup>2</sup> Work Address: doc. Ing. Kristína Šambronská, PhD. (ORCID 0000-0002-7327-9431), Katedra turizmu a hotelového manažmentu, Fakulta manažmentu, ekonomiky a obchodu, Prešovská univerzita v Prešove, Konštantínova 16, 080 01 Prešov, Slovakia

Email: kristina.sambronska@unipo.sk

November 2025 using a questionnaire distributed to 259 local residents directly involved in regional ecotourism activities. The measurement and structural models were analyzed utilizing SmartPLS software. The findings confirmed that community involvement has a significant direct effect on both perceived benefits and community support. Perceived benefits were also found to significantly and positively influence community support. Surprisingly, the mediating effect of perceived benefits between community involvement and support was not statistically significant. This indicates that the relationship between resident involvement and support is not strictly dependent on perceived material or economic gains. In conclusion, the study underscores that successful ecotourism development requires a balanced approach that combines the enhancement of local benefits with active community participation and psychological empowerment in decision-making processes.

Key words: ecotourism, community, benefits

### **Abstrakt**

Cestovný ruch predstavuje jedno z najrýchlejšie sa rozvíjajúcich odvetví na svete, pričom ekoturizmus sa od konca 80. rokov 20. stor. presadzuje ako kľúčový nástroj udržateľného rozvoja. Úspešná implementácia ekoturizmu je však v podstatnej miere závislá od podpory a akceptácie zo strany hostiteľských komunít. Hlavným cieľom tejto štúdie bolo preskúmať determinanty podpory miestnych komunít pre rozvoj ekoturizmu prostredníctvom teoretického modelu založeného na teórii sociálnej výmeny (Social Exchange Theory – SET), s osobitným zameraním na úlohu zapojenia komunity a vnímaných prínosov. Výskum sa uskutočnil v indickom štáte Meghalaya (konkrétne v okrese East Khasi Hills). Kvantitatívne dáta boli získané v období od októbra do novembra 2025 prostredníctvom dotazníkového prieskumu od 259 miestnych obyvateľov, ktorí sú priamo spätí s ekoturistickými aktivitami v regióne. Na analýzu meracieho a štruktúrného modelu bol použitý softvér SmartPLS. Výsledky analýzy potvrdili, že zapojenie komunity má významný priamy vplyv na vnímané prínosy aj na samotnú podporu ekoturizmu. Vnímané prínosy taktiež signifikantne a pozitívne ovplyvňujú podporu komunity. Prekvapivým zistením však bolo, že sprostredkovateľský (mediačný) účinok vnímaných prínosov medzi zapojením komunity a jej podporou nebol štatisticky významný. Z toho vyplýva, že vzťah medzi zapojením obyvateľov a ich podporou nie je bezprostredne závislý od vnímaných materiálnych či ekonomických výhod. V závere štúdia zdôrazňuje, že úspešný rozvoj ekoturizmu si vyžaduje vyvážený prístup, ktorý kombinuje nielen zvyšovanie lokálnych benefitov, ale predovšetkým aktívnu participáciu a psychologické posilnenie miestnych komunít v rozhodovacích procesoch

Kľúčové slová: ekoturizmus, komunita, prínos

### **Introduction**

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-expanding businesses, accounting for over 13 percent of global GDP in both direct and indirect modes. It promotes 'derived demand' and 'interdependence' among various global economic sectors.

The term "ecotourism" first appeared in the late 1980s as a direct result of the world's acceptance of sustainable and universal ecological practices (Diamantis, 1999). One of the most widely embraced definitions of ecotourism is the one developed by Sirakaya et al.

(1999), which states, “ecotourism is a new form of nonconsumptive, educational, and romantic tourism to relatively undisturbed and under-visited areas of immense natural beauty, and cultural and historical importance for the purposes of understanding and appreciating the natural and sociocultural history of the host destination”.

Hillel (2002) argued that the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social, and environmental sustainability) should be incorporated into ecotourism, which should also contribute positively in terms of money and politics to the preservation of vulnerable ecosystems and protected areas. It should also ensure that indigenous people and local communities are actively involved and benefit economically from ecotourism (Cobbinah, 2015).

Unfortunately, local knowledge of the ecotourism concept is frequently ignored. The word "ecotourism" is frequently adopted and imposed on local populations by international agencies, NGOs, and governments in many developing nations with abundant ecotourism resources. These communities frequently experience the results of ecotourism activities, both positive and harmful, despite the fact that their viewpoints on what ecotourism means are frequently disregarded (Cobbinah, 2015).

Understanding local citizens' perspectives on development is crucial before community members start developing tourism resources. Without community support, it is challenging to establish an ecotourism economy in a community (Menning, n.d.). Andereck and Vogt (2000), noted that local acceptance must also be taken into account. It was highlighted that the growth of tourism in a community involves more than just matching product supply with tourist demand. Additionally, community members finally decide which tourism-related effects are acceptable and which ones are problematic.

This study aims to assess the support from local communities towards ecotourism. It will develop a framework for investigating the link between locals' support for the growth of ecotourism and preceding variables of community involvement and perceived benefits.

### **Theoretical Background**

The notion of ecotourism became popular in the late 1980s, as a result of the detrimental social and environmental effects of mass tourism, which prioritizes economic expansion and money over environmental preservation and the sociocultural objectives of host communities (Ziffer, 1989). Growing awareness of the negative effects of mass tourism on the environment, local communities, and cultures, as well as the concept of sustainable development, have caused sustainable types of tourism, such as ecotourism, to gain favour (WCED, 1987).

A community is a collective of individuals who reside in a certain geographic area, sharing common interests while possessing diverse experiences and opinions (Pezeshki et al., 2023). In tourism studies, community support is defined as the behavioral intentions of locals to promote the growth of tourism in their region, originating from their psychological beliefs (Wang and Qu, 2014). According to earlier studies, ecotourism efforts wouldn't be successful without the participation, support and cooperation of the host community (Sobhani et al., 2022; Upadhaya et al., 2022). Researchers have investigated many factors (such as community involvement, community attachment, political viewpoint, ecocentric attitude,

perceived benefit, etc.) that act as antecedents to community support. Several tourism academics have used perceived benefit as a mediating variable and as a way to evaluate their theoretical models (Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004; Lee, 2013). There have also been some studies that explored the correlation between the involvement of the community and their support for ecotourism (López et al., 2020; Pazhuhan et al., 2023).

A relationship developed by community members working together to accomplish mutual objectives and improve their community can be defined as community involvement (McCloskey et al., 2013). Working together with members of a community for the good of the neighbourhood is another definition of community involvement. Connections and interactions within the community are crucial for forging enduring links and relationships in community involvement. Participating in the community can provide people with a sense of belonging, credibility, and trust (Jaafar et al., 2015).

Perceived benefit in tourism studies refers to the realms of economic and non-economic value that could affect the community. According to Perdue et al. (1990), tourism has a favourable impact on local cultural activities, entertainment venues, and the establishment of public and recreational amenities. Because tourism development creates job possibilities and raises personal wealth, individuals who financially gain from the business will support it wholeheartedly. On the other hand, people who are not financially impacted won't be concerned about the growth of tourism (Gursoy et al., 2010; Gursoy and Kendall, 2006). Communities are less inclined to embrace tourism development when they see more costs than benefits. As a result, depending on the social and cultural implications of the tourism activities, the local population will either regard tourism as having a beneficial or a bad impact on their lives. Notably, the level of support from the local population depends on the benefits that the present and future tourism growth have provided for them (Hanafiah et al., 2021).

In order to understand locals' perspectives on tourism, the Social Exchange Theory (SET) has been widely applied. According to Ap (1992), SET is "A general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation". According to SET, locals will be open to the trade if they believe the benefits of tourism development outweigh the costs. Because perceptions of the trade are not uniform, someone who understands the benefits of tourism will assess the exchange differently from someone who does not (Ribeiro et al., 2017). In order to understand how locals feel about tourism, the Social Exchange Theory has frequently been used in tourism studies as a theoretical framework. Sociology, economics, and social psychology all employ the Social Exchange Theory to explain various facets of social relations and the transactions that take place within them (Boley et al., 2014). It provides a framework for analysing the position that an individual actor might assume in exchange for others doing a beneficial action (Emerson, 1976). According to Nunkoo et al. (2013), the popularity of SET is due to the theory's recognition of the host community's heterogeneous nature, where various groups of people may have various attitudes toward tourism depending on how they view the industry's advantages and disadvantages.

Based on the above discussion, the following hypotheses are formed,

**H1: Community Involvement positively and significantly affects Perceived Benefit**

H2: Perceived Benefit positively and significantly affects Community Support

H3: Community Involvement positively and significantly affects Community Support

The proposed model for this study is shown in Figure 1, indicating that locals' perceptions of the prospective benefits have an impact on community support. The model also shows that residents' involvement in the ecotourism activities also has an impact on future ecotourism development.

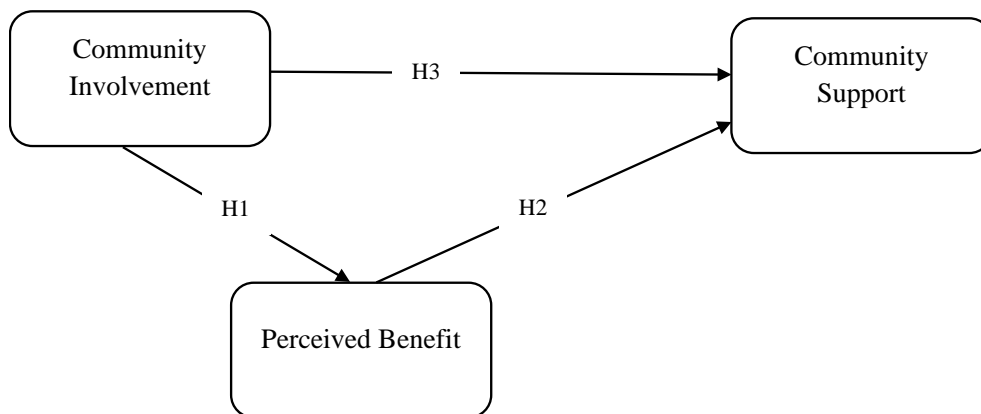


Figure 1 - Conceptual model

Source: authors

## Methods

The present study was conducted in the state of Meghalaya, located in the northeastern region of India. Known for its rich biodiversity, high rainfall, and unique socio-cultural characteristics, Meghalaya represents an important ecotourism destination. The state is predominantly inhabited by indigenous tribal communities, particularly the Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo tribes, and is globally recognized for its matrilineal social system, especially among the Khasi and Jaintia populations. This socio-cultural distinctiveness makes Meghalaya a compelling context for examining community perspectives on ecotourism.

The empirical investigation focused on selected villages situated within eleven Community and Rural Development Blocks (C&RD Blocks) in the East Khasi Hills District, one of the most prominent and tourism-intensive districts of the state. The district includes major tourist destinations such as Cherrapunji (Sohra), Mawlynnong, and Shillong, which attract both domestic and international visitors due to their scenic landscapes, waterfalls, living root bridges, and cultural heritage. The increasing tourism activity in these areas has led to greater interaction between local communities and tourism stakeholders, making it a relevant setting to assess community involvement and support for ecotourism.

The selected villages were chosen based on their proximity to key ecotourism sites and their active or potential engagement in tourism-related activities. These communities are directly or indirectly influenced by ecotourism development, either through employment opportunities, small-scale enterprises, or participation in community-based tourism initiatives. At the same time, they are also exposed to the socio-economic and environmental impacts associated with tourism growth.

### **Questionnaire development**

A 15-item questionnaire was developed based on previous literature. The 4-item scale for *community involvement* was adapted from Tosun (2006) and Nicholas et al. (2009). Six items measured the *perceived benefits* of the host residents. The scale proposed by Gursoy et al. (2002) was adopted to measure the economic benefits (measured by two items), whereas the scale for sociocultural benefits (measured by two items) was adapted from Gursoy and Rutherford (2004), and the environmental benefits of tourism (two items) were adapted from Látková and Vogt (2012). A 5-item scale for future *support for ecotourism* development was taken from Halim et al. (2022). A five-point Likert scale was used to measure these variables, ranging from “strongly agree” (coded as 1) to “strongly disagree” (coded as 5). The questionnaire was sent to four academics specializing in ecotourism, and based on their comments, it was adjusted according to the target population and location.

Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire from 259 residents who are directly related to the ecotourism activities of the region. The data collection was conducted during the months of October and November 2025. The sample size was determined using g\*power software. The calculation was done using effect size at 0.15 (medium effect),  $\alpha$  at 0.05, and power at 0.80 in the input, as these values are the most recommended ones for social science and business research (Hair et al., 2021). The minimum sample size was found to be 77. However, for a better representation of the population and to reduce standard error, we considered a higher number of samples for this research. A stratified random sampling technique was used to collect data, and it was analyzed using SmartPLS software.

### **Results**

The evaluation of the model using SmartPLS involves two main stages: assessment of the measurement (outer) model and the structural (inner) model (Hair et al., 2019). In the first stage, the measurement model was examined by analysing indicator loadings, followed by an assessment of construct reliability through internal consistency measures (Mandić & Vuković, 2022).

Internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability (CR). As recommended in prior studies, indicator loadings should exceed 0.5, while both CR and Cronbach’s alpha should be above the threshold of 0.7 to ensure adequate reliability (Abbasi et al., 2019). Convergent validity was then assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE), with values greater than 0.5 indicating that the constructs explain a sufficient proportion of variance in their indicators (Hair et al., 2019). To establish discriminant validity, the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT) was employed, with values below 0.9 confirming that the constructs are empirically distinct (Hair et al., 2019).

The following tables (Table 1-2) show the results of the measurement model along with the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation). All the values fall within the required range. Therefore, the model fulfills the criterion of validity and reliability.

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Mean	SD
Community involvement	CI1	0.892	0.919	0.902	0.772	3.864	1.152
	CI2	0.809					
	CI3	0.922					
	CI4	0.888					
Community Support	CS1	0.907	0.926	0.924	0.771	3.724	0.941
	CS2	0.917					
	CS3	0.753					
	CS4	0.901					
	CS5	0.904					
Perceived Benefit	PB1	0.767	0.891	0.857	0.584	3.868	0.873
	PB2	0.814					
	PB3	0.782					
	PB4	0.596					
	PB5	0.781					
	PB6	0.823					

Table 1 - Item loadings, construct reliability, and convergent validity

Source: Own processing

Constructs	CI	CS	PB
CI			
CS	0.383		
PB	0.179	0.395	

Table 2 - HTMT

Source: Own processing

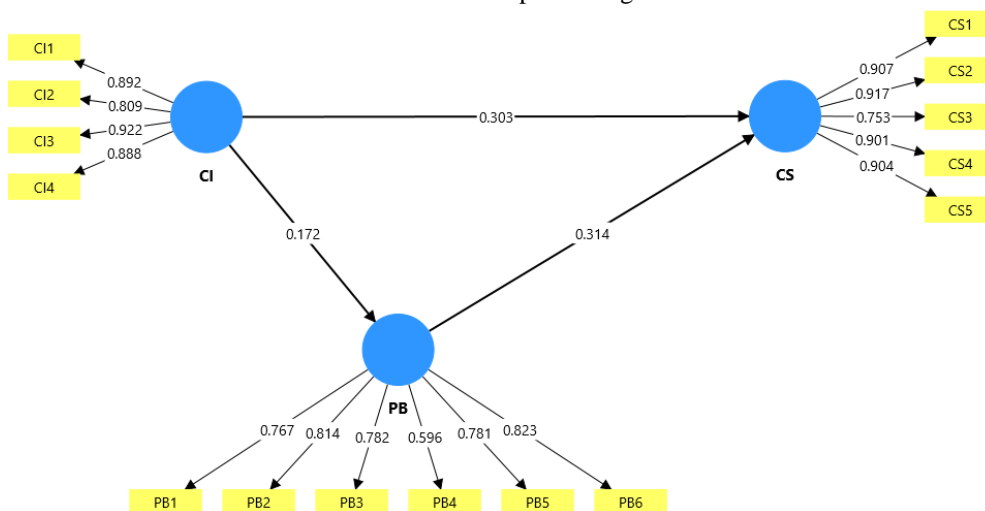


Figure 2 - Indicates the structural model with factor loadings.

Source: Own processing

Finally, model fit was evaluated using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). The obtained SRMR value is 0.076, which falls below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating an acceptable model fit (Henseler et al., 2016).

To examine the causal relationships among the constructs (structural model), structural equation modelling was employed using SmartPLS with 5,000 bootstrap samples (two-tailed). The results are presented in Table 3-4.

The findings indicate that community involvement (CI) has a significant direct effect on perceived benefit (PB) ( $p = 0.034$ ,  $\beta = 0.172$ ). Further, perceived benefit (PB) significantly influences community support (CS) ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $\beta = 0.314$ ). In addition, community involvement (CI) also exerts a significant direct effect on community support (CS) ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $\beta = 0.303$ ). Therefore, all the hypotheses are supported.

Table 3 illustrates the direct effects of the constructs with path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values for assessing the structural model.

Hypothesis path	Coefficient	P values	Result
<b>H1: CI -&gt; PB</b>	0.172	0.034	Accepted
<b>H2: PB -&gt; CS</b>	0.314	0.000	Accepted
<b>H3: CI -&gt; CS</b>	0.303	0.000	Accepted

Table 3 - Direct effects  
Source: Own processing

Table 4 shows the mediating effect of PB between CI and CS. The results indicate that the indirect effect of CI on CS through PB is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.087$ ,  $\beta = 0.054$ ). Therefore, the mediating effect of perceived benefit is not supported, and the corresponding hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis path	Coefficient	P values	Result
<b>CI -&gt; PB -&gt; CS</b>	0.054	0.087	Rejected

Table 4 - Specific indirect effect  
Source: Own processing

## Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the determinants of community support for ecotourism by developing a theoretical model grounded in Social Exchange Theory, focusing on the role of community involvement and perceived benefits. The findings provide important insights into how residents evaluate ecotourism development and the extent to which their participation and perceived gains influence their support.

Consistent with the principles of Social Exchange Theory, the results indicate that community involvement (CI) has a significant positive effect on perceived benefits (PB) as well as on community support (CS). This suggests that when residents are actively involved in ecotourism-related decision-making and activities, they are more likely to recognize the benefits associated with tourism development and, consequently, express stronger support for it. This finding aligns with previous studies by Lee (2013) and Ribeiro et al. (2014), which emphasize the importance of participatory approaches in fostering positive attitudes toward

tourism development. The direct effect of CI on CS further highlights that involvement itself, beyond tangible outcomes, contributes to a sense of inclusion and empowerment among residents, thereby strengthening their support.

The study also reveals that perceived benefits (PB) significantly influence community support (CS), reinforcing the central proposition of Social Exchange Theory that individuals are more likely to support initiatives from which they derive value. Residents who perceive ecotourism as beneficial, whether economically, socially, or environmentally, are more inclined to endorse its future development. This finding is consistent with earlier research suggesting that perceived benefits act as a key driver of community support for tourism initiatives.

However, contrary to expectations, the mediating effect of perceived benefits between community involvement and community support was not statistically significant. Although CI significantly influences both PB and CS individually, the indirect pathway (CI → PB → CS) was not supported. This indicates that the relationship between community involvement and support is not necessarily dependent on perceived benefits. In other words, residents may support ecotourism development primarily because of their involvement in the process, rather than solely based on the benefits they perceive.

This finding offers an interesting contribution to the existing literature. While prior studies have often emphasized perceived benefits as a key mediating mechanism, the present results suggest that participatory engagement itself can act as a direct driver of support, independent of benefit evaluation. This may be explained by the sense of ownership, trust, and inclusion that emerges when communities are involved in planning and management processes. Such involvement can foster positive attitudes even in situations where perceived benefits are moderate or uncertain.

Overall, the findings highlight that both perceived benefits and community involvement are important, yet distinct, determinants of community support for ecotourism. While perceived benefits reinforce support through a value-based exchange mechanism, community involvement strengthens support through social and psychological pathways such as empowerment and inclusion. These insights underscore the need for ecotourism policies that not only enhance local benefits but also actively engage communities in decision-making processes to ensure long-term sustainability and support.

### **Implication**

This study contributes to tourism literature by reinforcing the relevance of Social Exchange Theory (SET) in explaining community support for ecotourism, while also extending it in a meaningful way. The findings confirm that perceived benefits remain a significant predictor of community support, consistent with SET's core premise of value-based exchange. However, the non-significant mediating role of perceived benefits suggests that support is not solely driven by benefit evaluation. Instead, community involvement emerges as an independent and equally important driver, indicating that participation-based mechanisms (e.g., inclusion, empowerment, ownership) can directly shape residents' support. This highlights the need to conceptualize community support through both economic (benefit-

driven) and socio-psychological (participation-driven) pathways, thereby enriching existing theoretical frameworks.

From a policy and management perspective, the findings emphasize that fostering community involvement is as critical as delivering tangible benefits. Tourism planners and policymakers should:

- Promote inclusive decision-making processes, ensuring that residents are actively engaged in planning and management.
- Design participatory governance structures (e.g., community committees, local consultations) to enhance a sense of ownership.
- Continue to enhance perceived benefits through employment opportunities, livelihood diversification, and infrastructure development.

Importantly, the results suggest that even in contexts where benefits are not strongly perceived, active involvement can still generate support, making participation a strategic tool for sustainable ecotourism development.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the role of community involvement and perceived benefits in shaping community support for ecotourism development. The findings reveal that both constructs significantly influence community support. While perceived benefits positively contribute to support, they do not mediate the relationship between involvement and support, indicating that resident participation itself plays a central role in fostering positive attitudes toward ecotourism.

These results underscore that community support is not driven solely by economic or material gains but is also strongly influenced by social inclusion and participatory engagement. By highlighting the dual pathways of influence - benefit-based and involvement-based - this study provides a more nuanced understanding of how sustainable ecotourism initiatives can be supported at the community level.

Overall, the study suggests that successful ecotourism development requires a balanced approach that combines enhanced local benefits with meaningful community participation, ensuring long-term sustainability and stakeholder alignment.

*This article was recommended for publication in the scientific journal Young Science by:  
doc. Ing. Mariana Dubravská, PhD.*

## **References**

1. ABBASI, A. Z., D. H. TING, H. HLAVACS, L. V. COSTA & A. I. VELOSO, 2019. An empirical validation of consumer video game engagement: A playful-consumption experience approach. *Entertainment Computing*, 29, 43–55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.entcom.2018.12.002>
2. ANDERECK, K. L., & C. A. VOGT, 2000. The Relationship between Residents' Attitudes toward Tourism and Tourism Development Options. *Journal of Travel Research*, 39(1), 27–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728750003900104>

3. AP, J., 1992. Residents' perceptions on tourism impacts. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19(4), 665–690. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(92\)90060-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(92)90060-3)
4. BOLEY, B. B., N. G. MCGEHEE, R. R. PERDUE & P. LONG, 2014. Empowerment and resident attitudes toward tourism: Strengthening the theoretical foundation through a Weberian lens. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 49, 33–50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2014.08.005>
5. COBBINAH, P. B., 2015. Contextualising the meaning of ecotourism. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 16, 179–189. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2015.07.015>
6. EMERSON, R. M., 1976. Social Exchange Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 335–362.
7. GURSOY, D. & K. W. KENDALL, 2006. Hosting mega events. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(3), 603–623. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2006.01.005>
8. GURSOY, D., & D. G. RUTHERFORD. 2004. Host attitudes toward tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(3), 495–516. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2003.08.008>
9. GURSOY, D., C. G. CHI & P. Dyer, (2010). Locals' Attitudes toward Mass and Alternative Tourism: The Case of Sunshine Coast, Australia. *Journal of Travel Research*, 49(3), 381–394. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287509346853>
10. GURSOY, D., C. JUROWSKI & M. UYSAL, 2002. Resident attitudes. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29(1), 79–105. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383\(01\)00028-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0160-7383(01)00028-7)
11. HAIR JR, J. F., ER. AL., 2021. *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
12. HAIR, J. F., J. J. RISHER, M. SARSTEDT & C. M. RINGLE, 2019. When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb-11-2018-0203>
13. HALIM, M. A., M. J. MAWA, S. K. DEB & H. M. NAFI, 2022. Local community perception about tourism impact and community support for future tourism development: a study on Sylhet, Bangladesh. *GeoJournal of Tourism and Geosites*, 44(4), 1260–1270. <https://doi.org/10.30892/gtg.44410-942>
14. HANAFIAH, M. H., M. R. JAMALUDDIN & A. RIYADI, 2021. Local community support, attitude and perceived benefits in the UNESCO World Heritage Site. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*, 11(1), 95–108. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCHMSD-03-2020-0034>
15. HENSELER, J., G. HUBONA & P. A. RAY, 2016. Using PLS path modeling in new technology research: updated guidelines. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 116(1), 2–20. <https://doi.org/10.1108/imds-09-2015-0382>
16. HILLEL, O. L. I. V. E. R., 2002. Ecotourism as a tool for Sustainable Development: Trends and Challenges. *Sustainable Development of Ecotourism Web-Conference*, 1–26.
17. JAAFAR, M., S. M. NOOR & S. M. RASOOLIMANESH, 2015. Perception of young local residents toward sustainable conservation programmes: A case study of the Lenggong World Cultural Heritage Site. *Tourism Management*, 48, 154–163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.10.018>
18. LÁTKOVÁ, P. & C. A. VOGT, 2012. Residents' Attitudes toward Existing and Future Tourism Development in Rural Communities. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51(1), 50–67. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287510394193>
19. LEE, T. H., 2013. Influence analysis of community resident support for sustainable tourism development. *Tourism Management*, 34, 37–46. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2012.03.007>
20. LÓPEZ, M. F. B., N. R. VIRTO & J. FIGUEIREDO, 2020. Determinants of residents' Word-of-Mouth behaviour and support for tourism. *Administrative Sciences*, 10(3), 51. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci10030051>
21. MANDIĆ, A. & M. VUKOVIĆ, 2022. Millennials attitudes, choices and behaviour - integrative analysis. *Journal of Ecotourism*, 21(1), 87–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14724049.2021.1932925>
22. MCCLOSKEY, D. J., M. A. MCDONALD & J. COOK, 2013. *Chapter 1. Community Engagement: Definitions and Organizing Concepts from the Literature | Principles of Community Engagement | ATSDR*. [https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce\\_intro.html](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/communityengagement/pce_intro.html)
23. MENNING, N. L. (n.d.). *Traffic and tourism in the Bitterroot: Tourism promotion, development, and management - ProQuest*. Retrieved July 28, 2022, from <https://www.proquest.com/openview/584e5ff07979c9565b29ade899fc6369/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=48644>

24. NICHOLAS, L. N., B. THAPA & Y. J. KO, 2009. Residents' Perspectives of A World Heritage Site. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(3), 390–412. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2009.03.005>
25. NUNKOO, R., L. J. SMITH & H. RAMKISSOON, 2013. Residents' attitudes to tourism: a longitudinal study of 140 articles from 1984 to 2010. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 21(1), 5–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2012.673621>
26. PACIONE, M., 2009. Urban Geography. In *Urban Geography*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203881927/BAN-GEOGRAPHY-MICHAEL-PACIONE>
27. PAZHUHAN, M., ET AL., 2023. Do inhabitants' perceptions support tourism sustainability? The case of Khorramabad in Iran. *Sustainability*, 15(14), 10926. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151410926>
28. PERDUE, R. R., P. T. LONG & L. ALLEN, 1990. Resident support for tourism development. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 17(4), 586–599. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(90\)90029-Q](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(90)90029-Q)
29. PEZESHKI, F., M. KHODADADI & M. BAGHERI, 2023. Investigating community support for sustainable tourism development in small heritage sites in Iran: A grounded theory approach. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, Vol. 29 No. 8, pp. 773–791, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2023.2220316>.
30. RIBEIRO, M. A., P. PINTO, J. A. SILVA & K. M. WOOSNAM, 2017. Residents' attitudes and the adoption of pro-tourism behaviours: The case of developing island countries. *Tourism Management*, 61, 523–537. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.03.004>
31. SIRAKAYA, E., V. SASIDHARAN & S. SÖNMEZ, 1999. Redefining Ecotourism: The Need for a Supply-Side View. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38(2), 168–172. <https://doi.org/10.1177/004728759903800210>
32. SOBHANI, P., H. ESMAEILZADEH, S. M. M. SADEGHI, I. D. WOLF & A. DELJOUEI, 2022. Relationship Analysis of Local Community Participation in Sustainable Ecotourism Development in Protected Areas, Iran. *Land*, 11(10), 1871. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land11101871>
33. TOSUN, C., 2006. Expected nature of community participation in tourism development. *Tourism Management*, 27(3), 493–504. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.12.004>
34. UPADHAYA, S., S. TIWARI, B. POUDYAL, S. GODAR CHHETRI & N. DHUNGANA, 2022. Local people's perception of the impacts and importance of ecotourism in Central Nepal. *PLOS ONE*, 17(5), e0268637. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0268637>
35. WANG, C. & H. QU, 2014. Study on influencing factors of residents' attitudes towards tourism development of village heritage sites. *Dili Xuebao/Acta Geographica Sinica*, 69(2), 278–288. <https://doi.org/10.11821/dlxb201402011>
36. WCED, U., 1987. *Our common future*.
37. ZIFFER, K. A., 1989. Ecotourism: The uneasy alliance. *Conservation International*. [https://scholar.google.com/scholar\\_lookup?title=Ecotourism%3A%20The%20uneasy%20alliance&publication\\_year=1989&author=K.A.%20Ziffer](https://scholar.google.com/scholar_lookup?title=Ecotourism%3A%20The%20uneasy%20alliance&publication_year=1989&author=K.A.%20Ziffer)

# **Mladá veda**

## **Young Science**

**ISSN 1339-3189**