

Regular article

Support for Tourism Development After The COVID-19 Pandemic: The Mediating Role of Quality of Life

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ABSTRACT

The role of local communities is a crucial factor in tourism development, particularly post-COVID-19 pandemic. Within the framework of social exchange theory (SET), this study examines how perceived advantages (both personal and community) affect support for tourism development, with quality of life acting as a mediating factor. A total of 196 empirical data were successfully gathered through the distribution of questionnaires, which were subsequently analyzed using PLS-SEM techniques. The results indicate that perceived benefits (personal and community) positively affect quality of life. The study also revealed that the quality of life has a beneficial impact on the level of support for tourism development. The correlation between perceived advantages (both personal and community) and support for tourism growth is ultimately mediated by quality of life. This research significantly contributes to both practitioners and policymakers in developing sustainable tourism.

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Introduction

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly involved the economies of countries worldwide (Zhong et al., 2022). The COVID-19 epidemic has had a substantial consequence for the tourism sector due to the widespread restrictions imposed on all public activities to mitigate the potential transmission of the virus (Sobaih et al., 2021). However, along with economic recovery and easing restrictions, post-pandemic tourism development has become a critical priority for many countries that rely on this sector for economic growth and public welfare (Ilo et al., 2024). Governments have undertaken various efforts to revitalize the tourism sector, including actively engaging the local community in tourism development (Vinerean et al., 2021). The active involvement of the local community is essential in fostering the progression of

sustainable tourism. Tourism development's success is greatly contingent upon the comprehension and endorsement of the local community (Jiang et al., 2023).

Support for tourism development is a process that comprises all stakeholders (local government officials, local community, and tourism developers) in such a way that decision-making can be conducted collaboratively (Ryu et al., 2020). Support from the local community for tourism development includes helping to build new tourist facilities, acknowledging the need for tourism development in the local area, and encouraging tourism organizations to invest in the region (Hai et al., 2023). Policymakers must get the backing of local community to successfully implement tourism development initiatives, ensuring maximum benefits, minimal costs, and efficient execution of plans for

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long-term viability. The sustainability of tourism development relies on the participation and backing of the local community (Chang et al., 2020).

Exploring the framework of tourism development, the significance of local communities becomes crucial, particularly in relation to their endorsement of tourism development. Local community support is often influenced by their perceptions of the benefits derived from tourism, which can be categorized into personal and community benefits (Parra-Lopez et al., 2021). Personal benefits refer to the direct advantages experienced by individuals, such as increased income, employment opportunities, and skill development (Su & Swanson, 2020). On the other hand, community benefits encompass collective advantages, such as improved infrastructure, the conservation of indigenous culture, and the improvement of public facilities enjoyed by the entire community (Çelik & Rasoolimanesh, 2023).

In addition to economic and social benefits, the quality of life (QoL) of local communities also emerges as a critical factor influencing support for tourism development (Bajrami et al., 2020). QoL refers to persons' assessments of their general well-being and life contentment, which can be influenced by various factors, including perceived benefits from tourism (Han et al., 2023). When tourism positively affects community well-being, local citizens are more likely to support the sector's further expansion (Yu et al., 2018).

Thorough research has been exhibited to explore the fundamental elements that motivate support for tourism development, including the perceived benefits (Kanwal et al., 2020), quality of life (Wang et al., 2022), and resident satisfaction (Pereira & dos Anjos, 2023). In addition, previous research has also discovered factors that influence assistance for tourism development amid the COVID-19 epidemic, such as attitudes (Moghavvemi et al., 2023), engagement (Erul et al., 2023), and empowerment (Li et al., 2023). Numerous research have examined the relationships between tourism benefits, quality of life (QoL), as well as support for tourism, a research gap remains, mainly in the post-COVID-19 context. Most previous research was conducted before the pandemic and has not accounted for the sustained effects of this global crisis on the local community's perceptions. The pandemic has altered social, economic, and environmental dynamics, which may also influence how communities perceive the benefits of tourism and its relationship to their QoL (Vinerean et al., 2021). In the post-pandemic era, community concerns regarding health and safety, changes in tourism consumption patterns, and global economic uncertainty may affect how they support future tourism development (Sigala, 2020).

With the aim of filling the current research void, this research will examine how personal and community benefits, together with quality of life, influence the extent of support from local communities for tourism development in the period after the pandemic. Moreover, this study will

examine the degree to which quality of life acts as a mediator in the interactions specified in the proposed model. By employing this methodology, the research aims to enhance the overall comprehension of how the perceived advantages of tourism might impact the quality of life of the local community and their endorsement of sustainable tourist development.

Literature Riview

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory (SET) is an essential conceptual model for understanding community reactions to tourism development (Wani et al., 2024). Based on SET, social interactions are regulated by a logical evaluation of costs and benefits, in which individuals aim to maximize their advantages while minimizing their disadvantages (Gautam & Bhalla, 2023). This theory has been extensively used within the domain of tourist studies to explore the way local communities perceive the effects of tourism and how these views shape their endorsement or resistance towards tourism policies (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024). SET is rooted in the premise that social behavior is transactional, with individuals assessing an interaction's potential benefits and costs before deciding whether to engage in it (Han et al., 2023). In the realm of tourism, SET offers a framework for analyzing the assessment of effects of tourism on the local community (Gautam, 2023). Local communities are more inclined to endorse tourist development when they believe that the advantages of tourism surpass the disadvantages. On the other hand, if the expenses are seen as comparatively greater, resistance to tourism may emerge (Munanura & Kline, 2023).

Perceived Benefits

Perceived benefits refer to the extent to which the local community recognizes various advantages of tourism in their surroundings (Su & Swanson, 2020). Bajrami et al. (2020) propose that an essential aspect in the growth of tourism is the perception of benefits. Research suggests that there is a clear correlation between encouragement of tourist development and the perception of benefits obtained from tourism. These results indicate that when the local community possesses detailed information on the development of tourism and encounters beneficial effects from tourism, they are more inclined to endorse future tourism growth and interact with tourists. According to Parra-Lopez et al. (2021), perceived benefits are shaped by two main dimensions: personal benefits and community benefits.

Tourism development often becomes one of the main strategies for enhancing economic and social well-being in various regions (Bajrami et al., 2020). Beyond its economic impact, tourism is also anticipated to offer social and cultural advantages that can increase the quality of life (QoL) of local community (Han et al., 2023). The personal benefits

perceived by individuals from tourism development, for instance, increased income, employment prospects, access to better services, and improved public facilities, are considered crucial factors that can influence their QoL (Prasad et al., 2023). In other words, when communities perceive that tourism development provides personal benefits, they are more likely to report improvements in their quality of life (Hai et al., 2023). SET offers a framework for comprehending the manner in which individuals assess the influence of tourism on their lives (Feng et al., 2023). According to this particular hypothesis, individuals are more inclined to endorse and experience contentment with the development of tourism if they perceive substantial personal benefits derived from such activities. The aforementioned personal benefits are anticipated to positively impact the overall QoL (Tam et al., 2023). Prior studies indicate a favorable correlation between individual advantages derived from tourism and the QoL within local communities (Bajrami et al., 2020; Su & Swanson, 2020).

H1: Personal benefits positively affect quality of life

Tourism development is often regarded as a crucial instrument for enhancing the quality of life (QoL) of local communities, mainly through the collective benefits experienced by these communities (Baig et al., 2024). These community benefits encompass various aspects, such as environmental, socio-cultural, and economic factors (Qin et al., 2021). In this context, the benefits derived by the local community from tourism development are expected to influence people's perceptions of their QoL, including social well-being, security, and overall life contentment (Kanwal et al., 2020) that social interactions are grounded in a cost-benefit evaluation, whereby individuals or groups are inclined to endorse and participate in activities that they perceive to provide more advantages than the costs or losses involved (Parra-Lopez et al., 2021). In the context of tourism development, when communities perceive collective benefits from tourism, they are likely to evaluate the impact of tourism positively, which enhances their perception of quality of life (Ramkissoon, 2023). Previous studies support a positive relationship between community benefits from tourism and quality of life (Tam et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2018). As research by Bajrami et al. (2020) indicates that when communities experience environmental, socio-cultural, and economic benefits from tourism, they report improved quality of life (QoL), including social well-being and overall life contentment.

H2: Community benefits positively affect quality of life

Quality of Life

Quality of life (QoL) denotes a person's subjective evaluation of their living situation, considering the cultural and value systems in which they are situated, along with their aspirations, expectations, standards, and apprehensions. It encompasses four dimensions: Four key aspects

must be considered: 1) physical well-being, 2) social well-being, 3) mental well-being, and 4) hygiene and safety (Karimi & Darban Astane, 2022). The idea of quality of life is multifaceted and all-encompassing, focused on individual happiness and optimal freedom. It serves as a social indicator that represents the functioning of various areas as seen by subjects (Han et al., 2023). Regarding the measurement of quality of life, Wang et al. (2022), propose two distinct methodologies. The initial measure assesses respondents' personal evaluation of their subjective well-being. Conversely, the second approach centers on metrics that represent different objective aspects of quality of life, including income, unemployment rates, the condition of the healthcare and educational sectors, and crime rates. Quality of life assessments are subjective evaluations that include cognitive analysis and emotional reaction. Hence, subjective assessments of quality of life, which focus on individual contentment with life in its entirety or particular aspects, are extensively employed in tourism research.

In tourism, the degree to which tourism can improve the QoL for the local community determines the level of support from the local community for tourism development (Wang et al., 2020). The development of tourism is generally believed to enhance the overall well-being of the local community. As a result, they are more inclined to endorse tourism development that achieves this goal (Vinerean et al., 2021). Wani et al. (2024) assert that local community support significantly influences the success or failure of tourism development. The perception of the local community on the impact of tourist development on their lives, particularly about quality of life, significantly shapes this support. Furthermore, Gautam (2023) suggests that when tourism development enhances the quality of life—whether through increased economic well-being, infrastructure improvements, or enhanced social cohesion—the local community is more likely to respond positively by offering greater support for tourism development. SET asserts that communities expect a reciprocal exchange of giving and receiving. Communities will support tourism development if it improves their QoL (Han et al., 2023). Research indicates that quality of life significantly influences support for tourism development (Hai et al., 2023; Tam et al., 2023). Studies demonstrate that enhancements in the QoL within local communities, resulting from tourism development, correlate with an increased level of support for such initiatives.

H3: Quality of life positively affects support for tourism development.

Tourism has the potential to yield substantial economic, social, and cultural advantages for local communities (Bhat & Majumdar, 2021). These benefits can be categorized into personal and community (Parra-Lopez et al., 2021). Local communities' perceptions of these benefits are

crucial, as they can influence their support for further tourism development (Wang et al., 2020). When communities perceive positive benefits (personal and community) from tourism, they tend to report an improvement in their quality of life (QoL) (Bajrami et al., 2020). The perception of tourism as beneficial to well-being can enhance support for its continued expansion, thereby improving QoL (Tam et al., 2023). Earlier research has emphasised the intermediary function of quality of life in this correlation (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024; Wang et al., 2022). Thus, according to this research, quality of life serves as a mediator in the

relationship between perceived benefits, both individual and communal, and the level of community support for a tourism development initiative.

H4: Quality of life mediates the effect of personal benefits on support for tourism development.

H5: Quality of life mediates the effect of community benefits on support for tourism development.

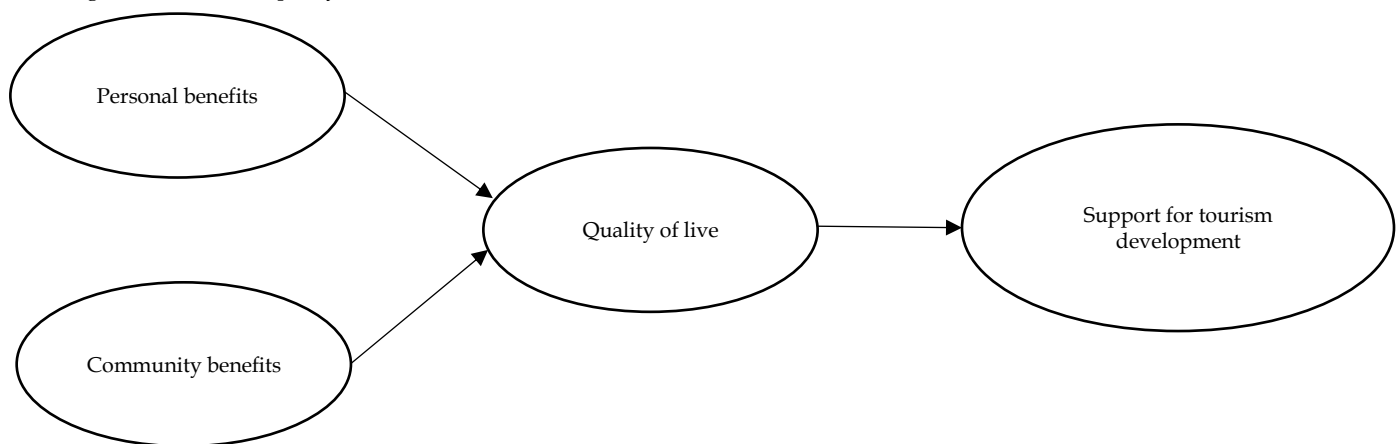


Figure 1. Research Framework

Methodology

This study conducts a quantitative methodology to analyze the factors affecting the local community's propensity to endorse tourism development. A quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for objective measurement of the variables under investigation and provides results that can be generalized to a broader population. The study focuses on local communities affected by tourism development in Ternate, North Maluku. The respondents involved in this study were local people who live nearby and work in the tourism sector, who are directly impacted by the existence of tourism. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of two main sections. The initial segment comprised demographic inquiries aimed at collecting fundamental data from the participants, including age, gender, and income level. The second portion comprises inquiries that assess the variables under investigation in this study. The survey was disseminated online via digital channels to maximize its reach by employing purposive sampling. The distribution survey, carried out between June and August 2024, resulted in 196 replies. statistics were analyzed by employing PLS-SEM methods.

This research measures several key variables influencing the local community's support for tourism development. A five-point Likert scale, where 1 signifies "strongly disagree" and 5 means "strongly agree," was used to assess each attribute. Each measurement is adapted from what

has been previously validated by previous literature and then modified according to the context of this research. Personal benefits were measured using three items derived from Parra-Lopez et al. (2021). Community benefits were assessed using three items developed from the research by Parra-Lopez et al. (2021). The construct of quality of life was assessed by three items derived from a scale modified from Hai et al. (2023). Lastly, support for tourism development was measured utilizing six items derived from the study by Bajrami et al. (2020).

Research Result

Measurement Model Assessment

In accordance with the standards established by Hair et al. (2019), the measurement model was evaluated by loadings, convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted), discriminant validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio), and internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability). The outcomes provided in Table 1 exhibit that the indicator loadings vary between 0.728 and 0.910, indicating the robust capacity of each construct to account for the variability of its specific indicators. Moreover, the findings indicate that the calculated average variance extracted (AVE) values surpass 0.50, suggesting satisfactory convergent validity. Furthermore, the results indicate the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement model, evidenced by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values

exceeding 0.70.

Furthermore, Table 2 presents the results of the discriminant validity analysis based on the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT).

The findings indicate the measurement model exhibits acceptable discriminant validity, as reflected by HTMT correlation ratios below 0.85.

Table 1. Results of the measurement model

Variable	Items	Loadings	AVE	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability
Community benefits	CB1: Tourism development improves the local economy	0.896	0.707	0.795	0.878
	CB2: Tourism development protects the culture and history of the community	0.853			
	CB3: Tourism development protects the social context of my destination	0.767			
Personal benefits	PB1: Tourism development brings economic benefits to me	0.768	0.647	0.729	0.846
	PB2: Tourism development allows me to gain skills and social relationships	0.843			
	PB3: Tourism development gives me job opportunities	0.801			
Quality of life	QoL1: My living conditions are very good	0.858	0.669	0.750	0.858
	QoL2: So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life	0.849			
	QoL3: I am satisfied with my life in general	0.741			
Support for tourism development	STD1: I am happy to support the development of sustainable tourism initiatives for my community	0.730	0.620	0.878	0.907
	STD2: I am willing to take an active part in the development of tourism-related plans and strategies	0.798			
	STD3: I am willing to take an active part in cultural exchange with visitors	0.848			
	STD4: I am willing to take part in promoting environmental education and conservation initiatives	0.811			
	STD5: I will support the further development of tourism in my community	0.754			
	STD6: I believe that tourism development will have a positive impact on the quality of life of all residents	0.780			

Table 2. Results of discriminant validity (HTMT)

Variable	1	2	3	4
(1) Community benefits				
(2) Personal benefits	0.423			
(3) Quality of life	0.406	0.664		
(4) Support for tourism development	0.653	0.721	0.702	

Structural Model Assessment

In accordance with the criteria of Hair et al. (2019), the assessment of the structural model was performed by analyzing the magnitude of route coefficients for the relevant hypotheses and the in-sample predictive capacity (R²). According to Table 3, the direct effects indicate that community benefits ($\beta = 0.178, p = 0.011$) and personal benefits ($\beta = 0.435, p = 0.000$) have a beneficial impact on quality of life, therefore providing support for hypotheses H1 and H2. Moreover, the analysis indicated that the QoL exerts a notable and beneficial impact on the level of support for tourism growth ($\beta = 0.612, p = 0.000$), therefore providing evidence for H3. Moreover, the findings suggest that the R² values for quality of life and support for tourist development are 0.272 and 0.345, respectively, which are indicative of weak and moderate predictive potential. Moreover, Table 4 demonstrates that the impact of community benefits ($\beta = 0.105, p = 0.025$) and personal advantages ($\beta = 0.257, p = 0.000$) on

support for tourism growth is positively mediated by quality of life. This finding strongly supports hypotheses H4 and H5.

Table 3. Results of Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Path coefficients	T statistics	P values	R ²
Personal benefits -> Quality of life	0.435	7.842	0.000	0.27
Community benefits -> Quality of life	0.178	2.302	0.011	2
Quality of life -> Support for tourism development	0.591	10.776	0.000	0.349

Table 4. Results of Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Path coefficients	T statistics	P values
Personal benefits -> Quality of life -> Support for tourism development	0.257	6.232	0.000
Community benefits -> Quality of life -> Support for tourism development	0.105	1.965	0.025

Discussion

The findings indicate that individual advantages are essential for enhancing quality of life. This matches those found in Bajrami et al. (2020) and Su & Swanson (2020), emphasizing the crucial impact of personal benefits on QoL. The findings suggest that tourism development must deliver personal advantages to the local community to improve their quality of life (QoL). The QoL within the local community is significantly affected by the personal benefits they receive. The higher the personal benefits the local community obtains, the higher the quality of life.

Moreover, the outcomes demonstrate a notable relationship between community benefits and overall QoL. This outcome aligns with earlier studies conducted by Tam et al. (2023) and Yu et al. (2018), which similarly highlighted the significance of community benefits resulting from tourism development in improving the QoL for local residents. This finding indicates that community benefits play a crucial role in determining quality of life (QoL). Significant benefits resulting from tourist development will improve the living standards of the local community. Conversely, tourism development that does not provide positive benefits to the community tends to decrease the QoL of the local community.

Moreover, the results clearly demonstrate the beneficial influence of QoL on the measure of local community endorsement for the development of tourism. This finding is consistent with prior studies conducted by Hai et al. (2023) and Tam et al. (2023), which recognized quality of life as a crucial factor influencing local community support for tourism development. This research indicates that the local community highly values the potential of tourism development to improve their quality of life. When the community believes that tourism development has the potential to enhance their QoL, their backing for such initiatives will be more robust. On the other hand, if tourism development fails to enhance the quality of life for the local community, it will lead to diminished support for such initiatives.

Conclusively, the findings suggest that the quality of life serves as a mediator between perceived advantages (both personal and community) and support for tourism development. This discovery expands upon prior research that has examined the critical function of quality of life as a mediator (Gautam & Bhalla, 2024; Wang et al., 2022). Research indicates that the greater the effect of perceived advantages (both personal and community) on quality of life, the more significant the influence of quality of life on the level of support for tourism development. Put simply, communities that profit both individually and collectively from the development of tourism generally have an improved standard of living, which in turn enhances their endorsement of tourism development. This discovery highlights the significance of quality of life as a crucial element in strengthening the level of support from the local community for the growth of tourism. Said otherwise, while personal

and community benefits are essential in shaping positive attitudes toward tourism, the perception that tourism genuinely enhances the quality of life is crucial in reinforcing this support. Furthermore, the findings emphasize that tourism development policies and practices should focus on providing economic or social benefits and ensuring that these benefits translate into tangible improvements in the quality of life for the local community.

Conclusion & Suggestion

This study demonstrates that the perceived benefits, both personal and communal, as well as the quality of life, significantly impact the level of support for tourism development. Indeed, the personal and community benefits have a beneficial impact on the overall well-being of the towns located in close proximity to tourist destinations. Furthermore, the quality of life has a favourable impact on support for tourism development. Moreover, the connection between perceived advantages (both personal and community benefits) and support for tourism development is mediated by quality of life.

The present study enhances the current understanding of tourism by examining the manner in which communities promote the development of tourism. This analysis offers significant perspectives on the determinants that influence community backing for the growth of tourism. Perceived benefits (both personal and community) are identified as significant determinants of enhanced quality of life and support for tourist development in the study. Hence, this study enhances the current knowledge on tourism by presenting actual data on the fundamental processes that facilitate the development of tourism. Furthermore, this work enhances the advancement of social exchange theory by presenting actual proof of the interaction between local communities and the development of tourism. Communities anticipate reaping advantages as a result of their backing for the development of tourism sector. Therefore, communities are more inclined to strongly endorse tourist development if it can bring concrete advantages and improve their standard of living.

Moreover, this study provides essential contributions to policymakers and tourism managers. The research asserts that local community support for tourism development results from the perceived benefits, both personal and communal, experienced directly or indirectly. Therefore, policymakers and tourism managers should prioritize not only the development of tourism but also its potential benefits for the local population. The research indicates that local community support for tourism development arises from the perceived benefits, both personal and communal, experienced directly or indirectly. Furthermore, tourism managers should diligently consider the quality of life of the local community, as it significantly influences their endorsement of tourism development. This can be accomplished by

executing initiatives aimed at enhancing the qualitative well-being of the local population. By adopting these strategies, policymakers and tourism managers can foster sustainable tourism that benefits the local community and tourists.

Several limitations and suggestions are identified in this study. First, the findings may have limited generalizability due to the data being collected only from specific regions. Therefore, future studies could validate this research model in other regions. Second, this study did not consider generational factors in investigating support for tourism development. As generational cohort theory suggests, different generational groups have distinct perceptions and behaviors (Herrando et al., 2019). Therefore, considering the generational factor of respondents would be highly beneficial for future studies to assess how much support for tourism development differs across generational groups. Third, this study is potentially subject to self-selection bias, where participants who choose to fill out the questionnaire tend to have a higher interest or involvement in tourism issues. This may result in results that are not fully representative of the entire population, especially individuals who are neutral or even indifferent to tourism development. Therefore, it is recommended that further research use more representative sampling techniques, such as stratified random sampling, in order to reach a more diverse group of people in terms of perception and level of involvement. Fourth, this study faces the possibility of common method bias (CMB) because all variables were collected through the same instrument (questionnaire) and at one time (cross-sectional). CMB can cause overestimation or distortion of the relationship between variables due to uniform responses from respondents. To reduce this potential bias, further research can consider using a multi-source data collection approach, such as combining perception data with observational or secondary data. Finally, the quantitative approach used in this study, although useful for testing causal relationships between variables, has limitations in exploring contextual aspects, cultural values, and social dynamics that influence people's perceptions and quality of life. Further research is recommended to adopt a mixed methods approach, which combines quantitative surveys with in-depth interviews or focus group discussions, so as to gain a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of the research findings.

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