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Is this about Feeling? The Interplay of Emotional Wellbeing, Solidarity and Residents' Attitude

Introduction

Tourism industry is playing a significant role in the social and economic domains in both developing and developed nations (Uysal et al. 2016). China is not an exception. Its potency as a source of economic growth has made it one of the important industries in China as well. Tourism may influence destinations from economic, social, cultural, ecological aspects, and thus may improve or reduce the quality of life (QOL) of destination residents (Kim, Uysal and Sirgy 2013). As some researches have highlighted, tourism destinations can achieve sustainable development only when tourism has improved the wellbeing of the residents and residents would like to express support for tourism development (Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy 2013; Gursoy & Rutherford 2004). Quality of life consists of a dynamic series of material and non-material factors that influence people's lives (Stiglitz, Sen, & Fitoussi 2009). When economic income reaches a certain level, the increase in material wealth does not necessarily bring a stronger sense of wellbeing. Emotions are significant elements of the human experience and have a considerable effect on individuals' psychological wellbeing (Pressman, Gallagher, & Lopez 2013). Despite the quantity of research examining residents' wellbeing in recent years, the emotional factors influencing the wellbeing of the residents of host communities remain overlooked (Uysal, et al. 2016). Previous researches have mainly explored the economic, social and cultural factors affecting residents' wellbeing. Notably, in addition to economic, social and cultural factors that affect residents' wellbeing, psychological factors such as emotions are also important factors affecting residents' wellbeing. Emotion plays a critical role in the QOL of the individual (Scuderi 2019). However, to date, the effects of emotional and psychological variables perceived by destination residents on wellbeing have been overlooked by previous works (Jordan, Spencer & Prayag 2019). Exploring the impact of the emotional connection between tourists and locals on the emotional wellbeing of residents will fill the gap of the previous research.

The main purpose of this research is to explore how the feelings between residents and tourists influence their sense of psychological happiness and their attitude toward tourism. Furthermore, how residents' sense of psychological happiness affects their attitude will be considered as well. In addition, our aim is also to observe the mediating effect of residents' emotional wellbeing between emotional solidarity and residents' attitude. Given the tourism industry is among the fastest growing industries in China, attention needs to be given to understand residents' quality of life and their perception about the industry. The results from this study would be of help in assisting local DMOs and relevant policy-makers to actively improve the wellbeing of the destination and develop a sustainable tourism plan.

Literature Review

Emotional solidarity refers to an emotional attachment between individuals or groups in a particular situation (Woosnam et al. 2015), characterized by perceived emotional closeness and having contact with others (Hammarström 2005). In 2009, Woosnam and his colleagues (2009)

first examined it in their study of host-guest relationship. The authors argued that residents in the destination develop emotional solidarity toward visitors based on certain factors (Woosnam 2009). According to Woosnam and Norman (2010) emotional solidarity consists of three dimensions: (1) welcoming nature (e.g. residents are very proud to have tourists to their community, think destinations benefit from hosting tourists, appreciate visitors for their contribution to the local economy, and treat area visitors fairly); (2) emotional closeness (e.g. residents feel close to visitors and have made friends with some of them); and (3) sympathetic understanding (e.g. residents identify with visitors, have a lot in common with them, feel affection toward them, and understand them). The influence of emotional solidarity as a precedent variable on residents' emotional wellbeing has not yet attracted enough attention in existing research. The emotional wellbeing in this article refers to the satisfaction of the destination residents with regard to their emotional life. Cummins et al. (1994) concluded that emotional wellbeing mainly came from leisure activities, religion, and entertainment. Krupinski's (1980) survey of respondents also showed that the emotional wellbeing of most people stems from spiritual and leisure activities. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 1: The emotional solidarity of destination residents with tourists positively predicts their level of emotional wellbeing.

More and more research recognizes the importance of emotional factors in host-guest relationships and residents' attitudes (e.g. Woosnam, Norman & Ying 2009; Woosnam 2012; Jordan, Spencer & Prayag 2019; Li & Wan 2016). Woosnam, Norman and Ying's (2009) conducted a series of focus groups with residents of a coastal South Carolina county and found that local residents and tourists not only have many common views on local history, culture and natural tourist attractions but also have some shared behavior such as participating in local festival events together. They concluded that the more shared behavior residents had with tourists, the more local residents supported the development of tourism. Thus, the emotional connection between tourists and residents can also positively impact how locals perceive tourism development.

Hypothesis 2: Emotional solidarity has a positive influence on residents' attitude toward tourism development.

The previous research indicates that residents' attitude toward tourism development is affected by both extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Andriotis & Vaughan 2003). Social exchange theory (SET) is the predominant framework applied in residents' attitudes research. In 2014, Sharpley in his literature review about residents' attitude argued that SET was the most used theory in examining community's perception with tourism. SET assumes that people make decision based on ration but neglect emotional and cognitive factors in this process (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon 2009). Given this, some tourism researchers have questioned the ability of SET to predict attitudes in future research (Gao et al. 2016; Wang 2016). Residents' attitude toward tourism does not depend solely on the costs and benefits of tourism while the potential emotional intimacy between the host and guest is likely to affect residents' perception with tourism which has been ignored in the relevant literature on residents' attitudes (Woosnam 2010; Woosnam & Aleshinloye 2013). Therefore, a number of scholars have suggested a clear and urgent need for applying new theories such as emotional solidarity or bottom-up spillover theory to evaluate locals' support for tourism (Kim et al. 2013;

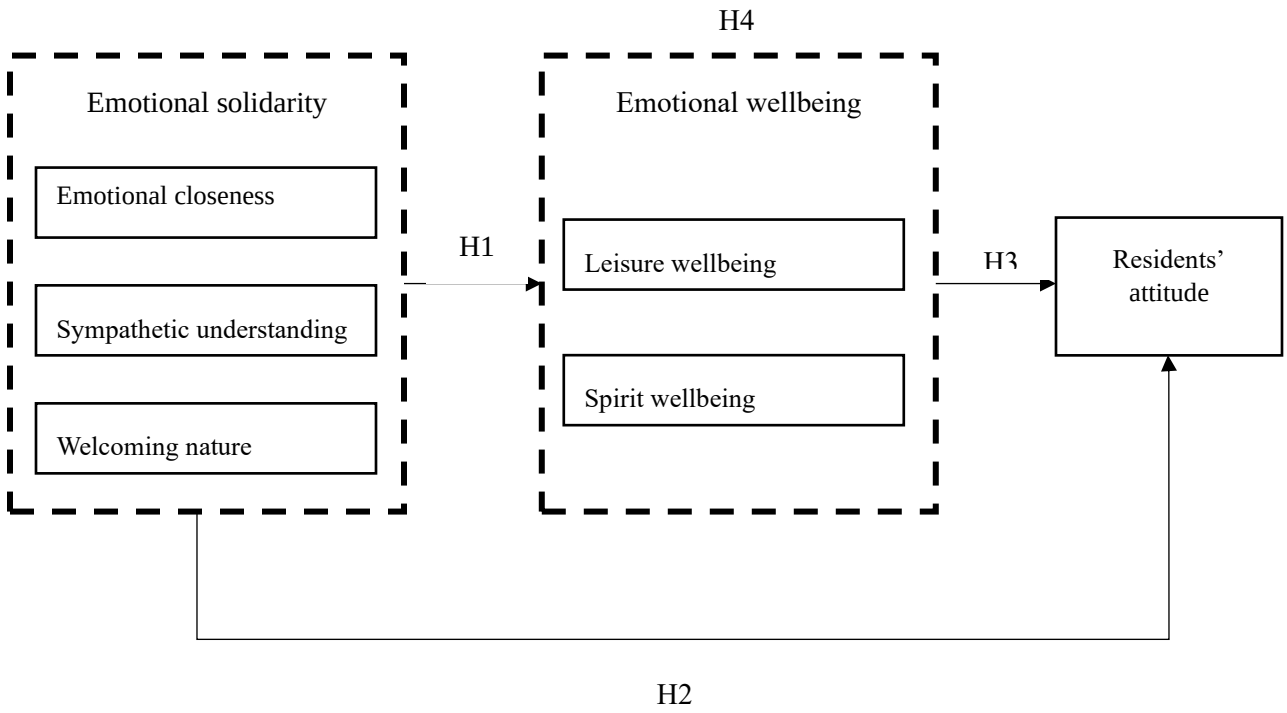
Ouyang et al. 2017). It is accepted that the long-term sustainable development of tourism development is likely to be achieved when the local residents support the tourism development because of better QOL resulting from tourism development (Woo, Kim & Uysal 2015). Yet, to date, a limited focus has been placed on considering emotional wellbeing as an antecedent of residents' attitude (Nicholas, Thapa & Ko 2009). Nunkoo & So (2015) pointed out sharply that the wellbeing of residents was greatly neglected in the theoretical framework of residents' attitudes toward tourism. Thus, we propose:

Hypothesis 3: Residents' emotional wellbeing has a positive influence on their attitude toward tourism development.

Hypothesis 4：Residents' emotional wellbeing mediates the relationship between residents' emotional solidarity with tourists and residents' attitude toward tourism.

For each of the formulated hypotheses, we have specified additional related hypotheses that test relationship between each dimensions of emotional solidarity and emotional wellbeing (H1a-H1f); dimensions of emotional solidarity and residents' attitude (H2a-H2c); leisure and spirit wellbeing on residents' attitudes (H3a-H3b); and mediating role of emotional wellbeing between dimension of emotional solidarity and residents' attitudes toward tourism development (H4a-H4f). All 17 hypotheses are presented in the proposed conceptual model (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Proposed hypothesized model.



Methodology

This study employed a survey of residents in three destinations in China. Residents were intercepted in the local parks or the community streets near icon tourist attractions of these destinations. Questionnaires were administered over a six-week period during June to August 2017. Through a systematic sampling strategy with a random start, respondents were identified (i.e., every fourth person passing by the investigator) and asked to fill in a self-administered questionnaire. A preliminary question served to exclude non-residents and those who are younger than 16 years old. A total of 386 questionnaires were collected. Yet, of all the questionnaires, 41 invalid questionnaires had to be excluded due to missing data or inconsistent answers. The remaining valid questionnaire is 345, which meets the minimum sample size requirement for structural equation modeling (Hair et al. 2014). The survey instrument was comprised using existing scales within the present literature. After ensuring the content validity of the questionnaire, the instrument was pilot tested. The questionnaire was completed with minor revises on the basis of the results of pretests. The final survey instrument consisted of four parts in the study (1) emotional solidarity, (2) residents' emotional wellbeing, (3) residents' attitude, and (4) social-demographic characteristics of respondents.

Results

We first performed a confirmatory factor analysis on all constructs in the model. Results of the CFA are as follows: $\chi2 = 311.912$, $df = 254$, $\chi2/df = 1.228$, $p = 0.000$; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = 0.985; Comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.987; RMSEA = 0.026; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.028; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.026; incremental fit index (IFI) = 0.987. All the selected fit indices produced values suggesting a good fit of the proposed measurement model to the data (Hu & Bentler 1999). Given the results, the measurement model was deemed both reliable and valid, the structural equation modeling (SEM) was conducted using AMOS software to test the hypothesized model. The results of the structural model shown in Table 1, testing hypothesis 1 (a, b, c, d and e), hypothesis 2 (a, b, and c), and hypothesis 3 (a, b, and c) indicated that the model fit of the overall model is good ($\chi2 = 340.333$; $df = 195$; $\chi2/df = 1.745$; $p = 0.000$; TLI = 0.959; CFI = 0.965; RMSEA = 0.047; SRMR = 0.0548) (Hair et. al., 2006). As shown in table 1, each path was significant, supporting all eleven hypotheses. First, the results support hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 and its 6 sub-hypotheses suggested that the level of emotional solidarity of the destination residents with tourists had a significant positive impact on their emotional wellbeing. Hypothesis 1a ($\beta = 0.33$, $t = 4.49$; $p < 0.01$), hypothesis 1b ($\beta = 0.18$, $t = 2.68$; $p < 0.01$), hypothesis 1c ($\beta = 0.15$, $t = 2.13$; $p < 0.05$), hypothesis 1d ($\beta = 0.36$, $t = 4.92$; $p < 0.001$), hypothesis 1e ($\beta = 0.16$, $t = 2.33$; $p < 0.05$) and hypothesis 1f ($\beta = 0.17$, $t = 2.31$; $p < 0.05$) were all supported. Second, findings supported hypothesis 2 proposing that residents' emotional wellbeing had a positive influence on their attitude toward tourism. The three corresponding sub-hypotheses 2a ($\beta = 0.14$, $t = 2.23$; $p < 0.05$), 2b ($\beta = 0.53$, $t = 2.92$; $p < 0.001$) and 2c ($\beta = 0.12$, $t = 8.83$; $p < 0.05$) were supported as well. Third, the relationship between the two factors of emotional wellbeing and residents' attitude toward tourism is confirmed. Hypothesis 3a ($\beta = 0.17$, $t = 3.25$; $p < 0.001$) and hypothesis 3b ($\beta =$

0.12, t = 2.39; p < 0.01) were supported as well, which suggests that both residents' leisure wellbeing and spiritual wellbeing have positive influences on residents' attitude.

Table 1. Structural Model Parameter Estimates and Bootstrapping results for Mediating Effect

	Hypothesized Path	β	Results
1	Hypothesis 1a: Welcoming nature → leisure wellbeing	0.33***	supported
2	Hypothesis 1b: Emotional closeness → leisure wellbeing	0.18**	supported
3	Hypothesis 1c: Sympathetic understanding → leisure wellbeing	0.15*	supported
4	Hypothesis 1d: Welcoming nature → Spirit wellbeing	0.36***	supported
5	Hypothesis 1e: Emotional closeness → Spirit wellbeing	0.16*	supported
6	Hypothesis 1f: Sympathetic understanding → Spirit wellbeing	0.17*	supported
7	Hypothesis 2a: Emotional closeness → residents' attitude	0.14*	supported
8	Hypothesis 2b: Sympathetic understanding → residents' attitude	0.53***	supported
9	Hypothesis 2c: Welcoming nature → residents' attitude	0.12*	supported
10	Hypothesis 3a: Leisure wellbeing → residents' attitude	0.17***	supported
11	Hypothesis 3c: Spirit wellbeing → residents' attitude	0.12**	supported

The bootstrapping method based on a 95% CI and 2,000 re-samples (Hayes 2013) with Mplus was utilized in order to assess the indirect effects of ESS factors (hypothesis 4) (i.e., Welcoming nature, Emotional Closeness, and Sympathetic Understanding) on residents' attitude via residents' emotional wellbeing. First, the indirect effects of emotional closeness on residents' attitude (hypotheses 4a, β=0.009, SEboot. = 0.011, 95% CI = -0.005 to 0.025), sympathetic understanding

on residents' attitude (hypotheses 4c, β = 0.014, SEboot. = 0.018, 95% CI = -0.005 to 0.42, welcoming nature on residents' attitude (hypotheses 4e, β = 0.027, SEboot. = 0.028, 95% CI = -0.010 to 0.068) via leisure wellbeing and sympathetic understanding on residents' attitude (hypotheses 4d, β = 0.014, SEboot. = 0.018, 95% CI = -0.005 to 0.42) via spirit wellbeing were not significant because the 95% CI straddle zero. Hence, hypotheses 4a, 4c, 4d and 4e were not supported. With respect to H4b and 4f, the findings indicated 95% CI of them didn't include 0 so these two hypotheses were supported which suggested emotional closeness (β = 0.009, SEboot. = 0.011, 95% CI = 0.005 to 0.025) and welcoming nature (β = 0.027, SEboot. = 0.028, 95% CI = 0.010 to 0.068) via spirit wellbeing had a statistically significant effect on residents' attitude. These findings show that residents' emotional wellbeing not only affects residents' attitude directly but also meditates the relationship between emotional solidarity and residents' attitude.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study was carried out to construct a theoretical and integrative model in support of the advancement of residents' emotional wellbeing and residents' favorable support for tourism, which may be helpful for the sustainable development of tourism. This research marks the early attempt to link residents' emotional solidarity with tourists and residents' emotional wellbeing and attitude toward tourism. The results suggest that emotional solidarity and emotional wellbeing had a certain explanatory power for residents' attitude, specifically: (1) The residents' emotional solidarity with tourists positively predicts their level of emotional wellbeing; (2) The residents' emotional solidarity with tourists has a positive influence on residents' attitude; (3) Residents' emotional wellbeing has a positive influence on their attitude toward tourism; (4) Residents' emotional wellbeing partly mediates the relationship between residents' emotional solidarity with tourists and residents' attitude toward tourism. Overall, findings from our study provide support for the proposition that residents' attitude toward tourism development may be affected by and through emotional and psychological variables such as feelings and degree of solidarity residents experience with tourists. Moreover, our results indicate that residents' emotional wellbeing plays a vital role in residents' attitude toward tourism as it does not only affect residents' attitude positively but also mediates the influence of residents' emotional solidarity with tourists on residents' attitude.

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