

# Perceptions of Tourism Impact and Tourism Development among Residents of Cuc Phuong National Park, Ninh Binh, Vietnam

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## Abstract

This study's objective was to investigate the Cuc Phuong National Park (CPNP) residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their level of support for tourism development in their areas. In April 2008, survey data were collected in 5 communes in CPNP. It was found that, in general, the surveyed residents perceived tourism impacts positively, especially the socio-cultural environmental impacts, and strongly supported tourism development. The study also revealed that residents' socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender) and residents' perceptions of tourism impacts (that is, whether they perceived positive/negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts) were likely to predict their level of support for tourism development in CPNP. As expected, the study reconfirmed the usefulness of the social exchange theory in explaining the residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their support for tourism development. Based on these findings, the concluding part discusses the study's implications and provides suggestions for the future.

**Keywords:** Residents' perception, tourism impacts, social exchange theory, Cuc Phuong National Park, Vietnam

## 1.Introduction

Tourism impact is a popular topic in tourism research (Ko & Stewart, 2002). Many researchers of this topic have studied residents' attitudes toward and perceptions of the impacts of tourism development, with the justification that the findings would be critical to tourism planning and management (Allen et al., 1993; Fredline & Faulkner, 2000). Other reasons for interest in this topic are based on the increasing evidence that tourism can have both positive and negative outcomes (Lankford & Howard, 1994) and that residents'

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support is essential for sustainable tourism growth (Chen, 2001; Ramchander, 2004). Because the positive attitude of residents is essential for visitor satisfaction and repeat visitation, determining local residents' perception of tourism development and its impacts plays a vital role in the future success of a destination (Andriotis, 2005; Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001).

Many studies conducted thus far on residents' attitudes toward and perceptions of tourism and tourism impacts have revealed that these aspects are predominantly based on and can be explained using the social exchange theory (Allen et al., 1993; Andereck et al., 2005; Andriotis, 2005; Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Ap, 1990, 1992; Chen, 2000, 2001; Getz, 1994; Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Jurowski et al., 1997; Kayat, 2000, 2001, 2002; Lindberg & Johnson, 1997; Madrigal, 1993; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; McGehee, Andereck, & Vogt, 2002; Sirakaya, Teye, & Sonmez, 2001, 2002; Yoon et al., 2001). Social exchange theory is "a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation" (Ap, 1992:668). It suggests that people evaluate an exchange based on the costs and benefits incurred as a result of that exchange. An individual who perceives benefits resulting from an exchange is likely to evaluate it positively, while one who perceives costs is likely to evaluate it negatively. Thus, residents who find that the exchange benefits them and increases their well-being are more likely to have positive reactions to tourism and therefore support tourism development. Residents who find the exchange problematic, correspondingly, will oppose tourism development. In this study, the social exchange theory has been utilized as the theoretical background for guiding the study purpose.

Earlier researchers and scholars have suggested that despite the availability of some research on residents' attitudes toward tourism and its impacts, it is necessary to conduct additional research on this topic in other geographical locations, in different settings, and over a period of time in order to not only reinforce earlier findings but also identify and explore other factors that may influence the host residents' perceptions of and attitudes toward tourism, its impacts, and their support for tourism development; such studies will further the development of theory in this field (Andriotis, 2004, 2005; Cavus & Tanrisevdi, 2003; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Kuvan & Akan, 2005; Sheldon & Var, 1984; Smith & Krannich, 1998; Yoon et al., 2001).

The site selected in this study is Cuc Phuong National Park (CPNP) in Ninh Binh province, Vietnam. This particular site was chosen for the case study because it is a well-established and well-known tourist site in Vietnam. CPNP was established in 1962 as Vietnam's first national park. Ever since its foundation, Cuc Phuong has been the model for other national parks and protected systems in Vietnam.

In spite of the importance of tourism to Cuc Phuong and the knowledge that the

attitudes and perceptions of local residents are vital for the success of tourism, little is known about the local residents' perceptions of tourism. Although there appears to be substantial research on tourism activities in CPNP, no published research has, so far, dealt with the residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism and their attitudes toward and support for tourism development in CPNP. Hence, there is a need for a study that will build on the existing, albeit limited body of knowledge concerning the local residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and their attitudes toward and support for tourism development. A systematic analysis of these aspects among the CPNP residents can help local authorities, planners, community decision-makers, tour-operators, and tourism promoters to identify real concerns and issues in order to implement appropriate and effective policies and actions in the area, thus optimizing the benefits and minimizing the problems associated with tourism.

## **2. The Research Purpose, Research Questions, Research Hypothesis, and the Conceptual Framework**

### **2.1. Study purpose**

This study aimed to gain better understanding of CPNP residents' perceptions and evaluation of tourism impacts and their support for tourism development in their area. In addition, the study also sought to understand the factors, specifically the socio-demographic factors, which may explain these perceptions and support levels. The specific research questions and research hypotheses that have guided the study are presented as follows.

#### **Research questions**

- 1 . What are the socio-demographic characteristics of residents in CPNP?
- 2 . How do CPNP residents perceive tourism impacts and how do they evaluate these impacts? How do they support tourism development in CPNP?
- 3 . Which of the variables under study explain the residents' support for tourism development in CPNP?

### **2.2. Research hypothesis**

The hypothesis developed for this study is as follows: The independent variables (residents' socio-demographic characteristics, residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, residents' evaluation of tourism impacts) do not significantly explain the dependent variable (residents' support for tourism development)

### 2.3. Conceptual framework

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework for the study. According to the framework, residents' socio-demographic characteristics, their perceptions of tourism impacts, and their overall evaluation of tourism impacts determine their support for tourism development. It is proposed that the social exchange theory constitutes the underlying theoretical perspective for this study.

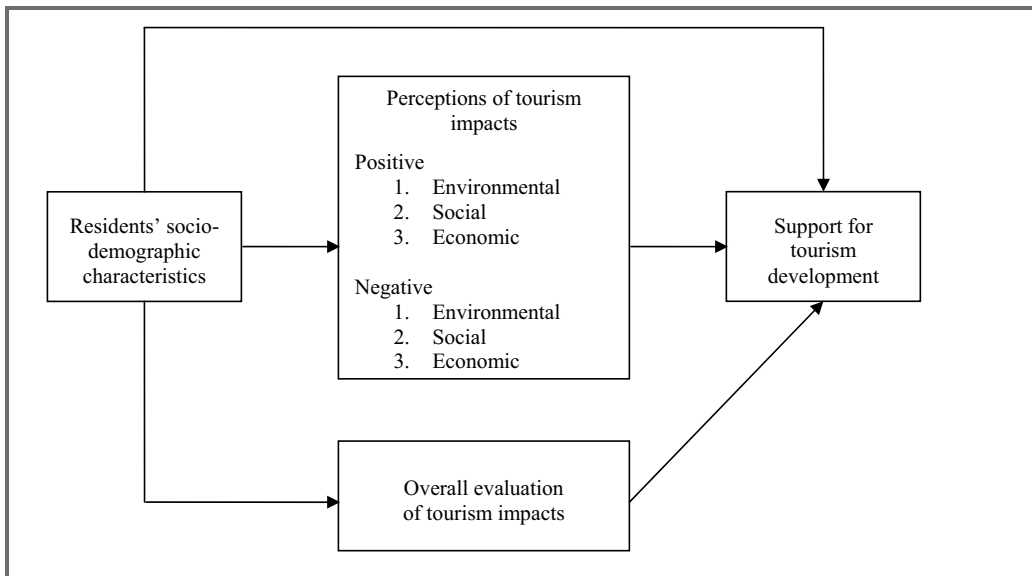


Figure 1. Framework explaining residents' perceptions and support levels

## 3. Research methods

### 3.1. Survey instrument

This study used the survey questionnaire method for data collection.

The questionnaire consisted of 53 items, divided into 4 parts as follows:

Parts 1-3: These parts altogether included 43 statement items, followed by a five-point Likert scale for the respondents' opinions (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided/neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree); these items measured the residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, their overall assessment of tourism impacts, and their support for tourism development in CPNP.

Part 4: This part comprised 9 questions pertaining to the socio-demographic characteristics of residents. The last question in Part 4 requested the respondents to

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provide any additional comments that they wished to make regarding tourism development in their community and in CPNP.

### 3.2. Population and sampling unit

According to the CPNP statistics (2004), CPNP extends over three provinces (Figures 2, 3); it covers 4 districts containing 14 communes and a population of 68,828 inhabitants. However, there are only 5 communes with 8 hamlets located wholly or partly within the boundaries of the park, accounting for a total park population of 2,200 residents.

Due to a limited financial budget and time constraints, it was decided that the surveys would be conducted using a manageable method. In specific terms, in this study, the 5 communes located wholly or partly within the boundaries of CPNP (see Figure 3), namely, the Cuc Phuong, Yen Quang, Yen Tri, An Nghia, and Thach Lam communes, were chosen to be the target areas and included in the primary sampling unit. These communes are located in the areas where tourism activities occur (in the form of informal settlements, restaurants, hotels, guesthouses, homestays, etc.). Residents living in these areas include both those who earn an income from tourism and those who are not involved in tourism.



Figure 2. Location of Cuc Phuong National Park

Source: [http://wikitravel.org/en/Cuc\\_Phuong\\_National\\_Park](http://wikitravel.org/en/Cuc_Phuong_National_Park) (2008)

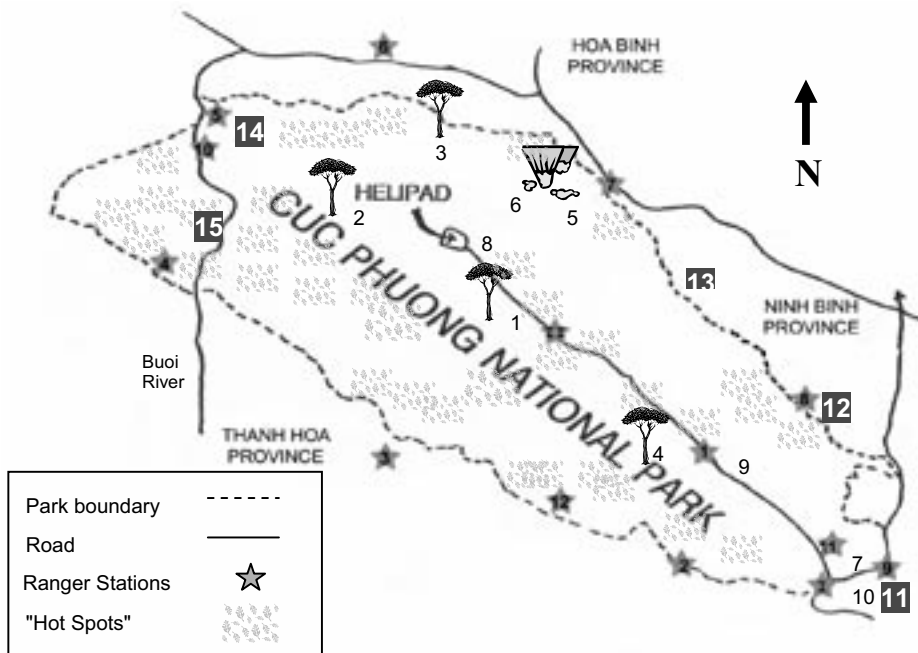


Figure 3. Cuc Phuong study areas

Note: 1. Big Tree (*Cinnamomum balansae*); 2. Big Tree (*Dracontomelon duperreanum*); 3. Big Tree (*Terminalia myriocarpa*); 4. Big Tree (*Tetrameles nudiflora*); 5. Cloudy Silver Peak; 6. Cay Cho Chi; 7. Park Headquarters; 8. Bong; 9. Inner Gate; 10. Outer Gate; 11. Cuc Phuong Commune; 12. Yen Quang Commune; 13. Yen Tri Commune; 14. An Nghia Commune; 15. Thach Lam Commune

### 3.3. Sample size and sampling technique

Since the data regarding the population size has not been recently updated, the researcher surmised that the actual park population could be far above the abovementioned figure of 2,200 residents (about 3,000 to 4,000 residents); hence, it was decided that the representative sample size would comprise approximately 340–350 residents, or equal to 10% of the total population of the study area (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970, cited in Jennings, 2001: 148). A combination of systematic and stratified random sampling approaches was employed for the sample selection.

Decisions regarding the number of people to sample at each commune were based on the following formula:

$$\text{Communes} = 5 = k$$

$$n = 250 \text{ households}$$

$$n/k = 250/5 = 50$$

Therefore, 50 households in each commune were approached to participate in this study, after which they were sent the survey questionnaires.

In this manner, a total of 250 households were contacted, with 238 individuals agreeing to participate; this indicates a response rate of 95.2%. Most of the questionnaires were completed in the presence of the survey teams, while some were left with the respondent and collected either later that day or on the following day.

The returned questionnaires with missing data were eliminated from the analysis, because any statistical result based on a data set with missing values would be biased to the extent that the variables included in the analysis are influenced by the missing data process. Following this elimination process, a total of 201 response questionnaires with complete data were retained for the analysis, which indicates a response rate of 80.4%.

### 3.4. Data analysis

Having collected the data, the next step was to analyze them utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 13.

Descriptive statistics summarizes the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics as well as the items adapted to measure their perceptions of tourism, evaluation of tourism impacts, and support for tourism development.

To test the hypothesis of this study, multiple regressions analysis was performed on a combination of 16 independent variables in order to predict support for tourism development (including the residents' socio-demographic characteristics, their perceptions of tourism impacts, and their evaluation of tourism impacts).

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1. Profile of the respondents

The sample appeared to suitably represent the population in terms of the demographic profiles of the respondents, which are presented in Table 1.

The study's participants were mostly male (62.7%), concentrated in the 26–55 years age group (69.1%). The majority of respondents were married (81.1%), born in CPNP (67.2%), and from the Muong ethnic group (65.7%).

A large section of the sample (77.1%) had jobs that were not related to tourism, and 65.2% of the total respondents had been living in the area for over 20 years.

In terms of education level, there was a concentration at the secondary and high school level (32.8% and 21.9%, respectively); college graduates constituted 17.4% of the sample, and 12.9% had completed university-level education.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents

Variables	Frequencies <sup>a</sup>	Percentages
Age (in years)		
18-25	30	14.9
26-35	76	37.8
36-55	63	31.3
56-60	19	9.5
Over 60	13	6.5
Gender		
Male	126	62.7
Female	75	37.3
Ethnic group		
Kinh	64	31.8
Muong	132	65.7
Other	5	2.5
Place of birth		
Cuc Phuong	135	67.2
Other	66	32.8
Marital status		
Single	34	16.9
Married	163	81.1
Divorced	2	1.0
Widowed	2	1.0
Education		
No schooling	7	3.5
Primary school	19	9.5
Secondary school	66	32.8
High school	44	21.9
College	35	17.4
University	26	12.9
Other	4	2.0
Monthly household income <sup>b</sup>		
Below VND 200,000	39	19.4
VND 200,000-500,000	59	29.4
VND 500,001-1,000,000	47	23.4
VND 1,000,001-1,500,000	24	11.9
VND 1,500,001-2,000,000	19	9.5
Above VND 2,000,000	13	6.5
Job status		
Tourism-related	40	19.9
Not tourism-related	155	77.1
Retired	2	1.0
Unemployed/disabled	4	2.0
Length of residency		
Less than 1 year	2	1.0
1-5 years	19	9.5
6-10 years	18	9.0
11-15 years	17	8.5
16-20 years	14	7.0
Over 20 years	131	65.2

<sup>a</sup>. n = 201; <sup>b</sup>. 1 USD = 17,000 VND



The monthly household income of the majority of respondents (84.1%) was below VND 1,500,000.

#### 4.2. Perception of tourism

Table 2 and Figure 4 present the responses to the 43 perception-related statements. The survey questionnaire was divided into six sub-sections, based on three aspects of tourism impact: positive/negative economic impacts, positive/negative socio-cultural impacts, and positive/negative environmental impacts. In addition, the respondents were asked to evaluate the overall impact of tourism in CPNP and to indicate their support for tourism development in CPNP.

In general, the results of this study indicate that the CPNP residents tend to have positive perceptions of tourism impacts. Remarkably, respondents agreed to all the positive statements. They especially felt that tourism had improved the quality of products and services ( $m = 4.0896$ ) in that region, increased residents' pride in the local culture ( $m = 4.0547$ ), contributed to the preservation of the natural environment and protection of wildlife in CPNP ( $m = 3.8856$ ), and provided an incentive for the restoration of historic buildings ( $m = 3.7363$ ). The respondents also agreed that tourism has positive economic impacts, but the mean scores for this aspect (ranging from  $m = 3.1194$  to  $m = 3.7214$ ) were not as high as those for positive socio-cultural and environmental impacts. Meanwhile, the respondents in their statements expressed their concerns over the fact that the prices of real estate and many goods and services in their community have increased because of tourism ( $m = 4.0547$  and  $m = 3.6915$ ) and that the income from tourism is not distributed equally among residents in their community ( $m = 3.1194$ ). They also agreed, albeit to a very slight extent, that the natural landscapes and agricultural lands in their area had diminished in recent years because of tourism ( $m = 3.3035$ ) and that tourism has had some negative impacts on the natural resources ( $m = 3.0597$ ). The respondents also tended to disagree with the statement that tourism is damaging their culture ( $m = 2.1692$ ) and has limited their use of recreational facilities ( $m = 2.3930$ ). The respondents, however, indicated uncertainty in nearly all the statements regarding the negative impacts of tourism, especially those related to the socio-cultural impacts of tourism.

In line with the findings by Tatoglu et al. (2000), Andriotis (2004), and Kuvan and Akan (2005), the present study found that the CPNP residents strongly agree that tourism has positive socio-cultural and environmental impacts. However, contrary to the findings of those earlier studies, which suggest that residents value positive economic impacts the most, the CPNP residents tended to value positive socio-cultural as well as environmental impacts, while ascribing a higher score to the latter aspect.

Another prominent finding of this study suggests that support for tourism development in CPNP is strong among its residents. They firmly believe that their community should support tourism development and are willing not only to be personally involved in the future development of ecotourism in CPNP but also to welcome more tourists ( $m = 4.2239$ ,  $m = 4.0945$ , and  $m = 4.0249$ , respectively).

These findings are similar to those of other studies such as Milman and Pizam (1988), King, Pizam, and Milman (1993), Haralambopoulos and Pizam (1996), and Ratz (2000), which demonstrated that the respondents of the respective studies not only supported the current extent of tourism but also looked forward to its expansion.

#### 4.3. Support for tourism development

To test the study hypothesis, this study used the method of computing multiple regressions simultaneously between the dependent variable (support for tourism development) and the independent variables (residents' socio-demographic characteristics, residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, and residents' evaluation of tourism impacts) in order to predict support for tourism development from a combination of a total of 16 independent variables.

Table 2. Tourism perception items and composite scales

Items	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean <sup>a</sup>	SD
<b>Positive economic impacts</b>							
Tourism has improved employment opportunities in my community.	8.5	16.9	16.4	43.8	14.4	3.3881	1.17416
Our standard of living has increased considerably because of tourism.	12.4	18.4	23.9	35.3	10.0	3.1194	1.19401
Tourism has attracted more investment to my community.	2.0	13.9	33.3	32.8	17.9	3.5075	1.00558
The quality of public services in the village is now better due to tourism investment.	2.0	10.4	22.9	42.8	21.9	3.7214	.98590
Tourism is one of the most important industries supporting the local economy.	5.5	10.0	28.9	42.3	13.4	3.4826	1.02516
Tourism creates new business opportunities for local residents.	5.0	10.9	20.4	42.8	20.9	3.6368	1.08279
<b>Negative economic impacts</b>							
Tourism income generated in the area goes to outside organizations and individuals.	13.9	25.4	32.3	19.9	8.5	2.8358	1.15235
Income from tourism benefits only a few people in this community.	6.5	28.4	24.4	28.4	12.4	3.1194	1.14703
The prices of many goods and services in the community have increased because of tourism.	4.0	14.9	15.4	39.3	26.4	3.6915	1.13330
Real estate prices in the community have increased because of tourism.	3.5	3.0	17.4	36.8	39.3	4.0547	1.00099
Seasonal tourism has created high-risk, under- or unemployment issues.	14.9	21.4	44.3	15.9	3.5	2.7164	1.01695
Tourism development in CPNP interferes with the residents' daily economic activities.	18.4	37.3	25.9	11.4	7.0	2.5124	1.12743
<b>Positive socio-cultural impacts</b>							
Tourism has improved the quality of products and services of tourism infrastructure such as roads, transportation systems, restaurants, shops, and guest-houses in the area.	1.5	4.0	14.4	44.3	35.8	4.0896	.88991
Tourism has increased residents' pride in the local culture of the community.	1.0	1.5	18.4	49.3	29.9	4.0547	.79498

Table 2. (continued)

Items	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	Mean <sup>a</sup>	SD
Tourism encourages a wide variety of cultural activities such as crafts, art, and music in the community.	1.5	11.4	24.4	47.3	15.4	3.6368	.92868
Tourism helps keep culture alive and helps maintain the ethnic identity of the local residents.	.5	6.0	21.4	50.7	21.4	3.8657	.83478
Tourism has resulted in greater cultural exchange between tourists and residents.	2.5	5.5	18.9	48.8	24.4	3.8706	.92908
Owing to tourism development, local people now have more recreational opportunities.	5.0	13.9	19.9	42.3	18.9	3.5622	1.09880
<b>Negative socio-cultural impacts</b>							
Local residents have suffered by living in a tourism destination area.	17.4	32.3	24.9	20.9	4.5	2.6269	1.12919
Tourism damages local culture.	27.4	40.8	21.4	8.5	2.0	2.1692	.99058
Tourism encourages residents to imitate the behavior of the tourists and relinquish cultural traditions.	13.9	31.3	21.4	27.4	6.0	2.8010	1.16198
The increase in tourist numbers has led to alienation between tourists and residents.	18.9	33.8	29.9	13.4	4.0	2.4975	1.06829
It is becoming increasingly difficult to find a quiet place for recreation around here because of tourists.	23.9	30.8	23.4	15.9	6.0	2.4925	1.18794
Tourism has limited the use of recreational facilities such as entertainment and recreational centers and sport complexes for the local people.	18.9	38.3	30.3	9.5	3.0	2.3930	.99486
Tourism contributes to social problems such as crime, drug use, prostitution, alcoholism, gambling, smuggling, and so on in the community.	20.4	21.9	22.4	26.9	8.5	2.8109	1.27046
<b>Positive environmental impacts</b>							
Tourism has contributed to the preservation of the natural environment and protection of wildlife in CPNP.	2.5	7.0	21.4	37.8	31.3	3.8856	1.01086
Tourism has improved the ecological environment of the community in many ways.	2.0	4.5	33.3	40.3	19.9	3.7164	.90232
Tourism has improved the area's appearance (visual and aesthetic).	2.5	8.5	25.9	45.8	17.4	3.6716	.94427
Tourism provides an incentive for the restoration of historic buildings.	.5	7.5	31.8	38.3	21.9	3.7363	.90284
<b>Negative environmental impacts</b>							
The construction of hotels and other tourist facilities have destroyed the natural environment in the region.	13.4	36.8	30.3	16.4	3.0	2.5871	1.01175
Tourism has negative impacts on the natural resources (including the collection of plants, animals, rocks, or artifacts by or for tourists).	11.9	23.9	25.9	22.9	15.4	3.0597	1.25157
Tourism has created significant solid waste and air, water, noise, and soil pollution.	18.9	24.9	12.9	34.3	9.0	2.8955	1.30538
Because of tourism, there now are fewer natural landscapes and agricultural lands in the area.	6.5	21.9	20.9	36.3	14.4	3.3035	1.15431
Tourism facilities built in and around CPNP are not in harmony with the natural environment and traditional architecture.	12.4	28.4	34.8	19.4	5.0	2.7612	1.05957
<b>Evaluation of tourism impacts</b>							
Overall, I believe that the benefits of tourism exceed the cost to the people of the CPNP.	4.5	14.4	16.4	50.7	13.9	3.5522	1.04332
I think tourism development in CPNP brings more benefit than harm.	.5	11.4	5.5	56.2	26.4	3.9652	.90762
I think tourism development in CPNP produces more negative impacts than positive impacts.	23.4	58.2	6.0	9.0	3.5	2.1095	.97875
<b>Support for tourism development</b>							
I would like to see more tourists in CPNP.	1.5	4.5	16.4	45.3	32.3	4.0249	.89687
The government should increase its efforts to provide infrastructure to support tourism development in CPNP.	.5	3.0	17.4	54.7	24.4	3.9950	.76484
The government should control tourism development in CPNP in order to maximize the benefits and minimize the cost of development.	1.0	10.4	25.4	37.3	25.9	3.7662	.98491
The community should support tourism development in this area.	0	2.5	9.5	51.2	36.8	4.2239	.71737
I am willing to be a part of tourism planning for CPNP in the future.	4.5	4.0	14.4	50.7	26.4	3.9055	.98286
I am willing to be involved in the development of CPNP for ecotourism in the future.	4.0	3.5	10.4	43.3	38.8	4.0945	.99299

<sup>a</sup>. n = 201; 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

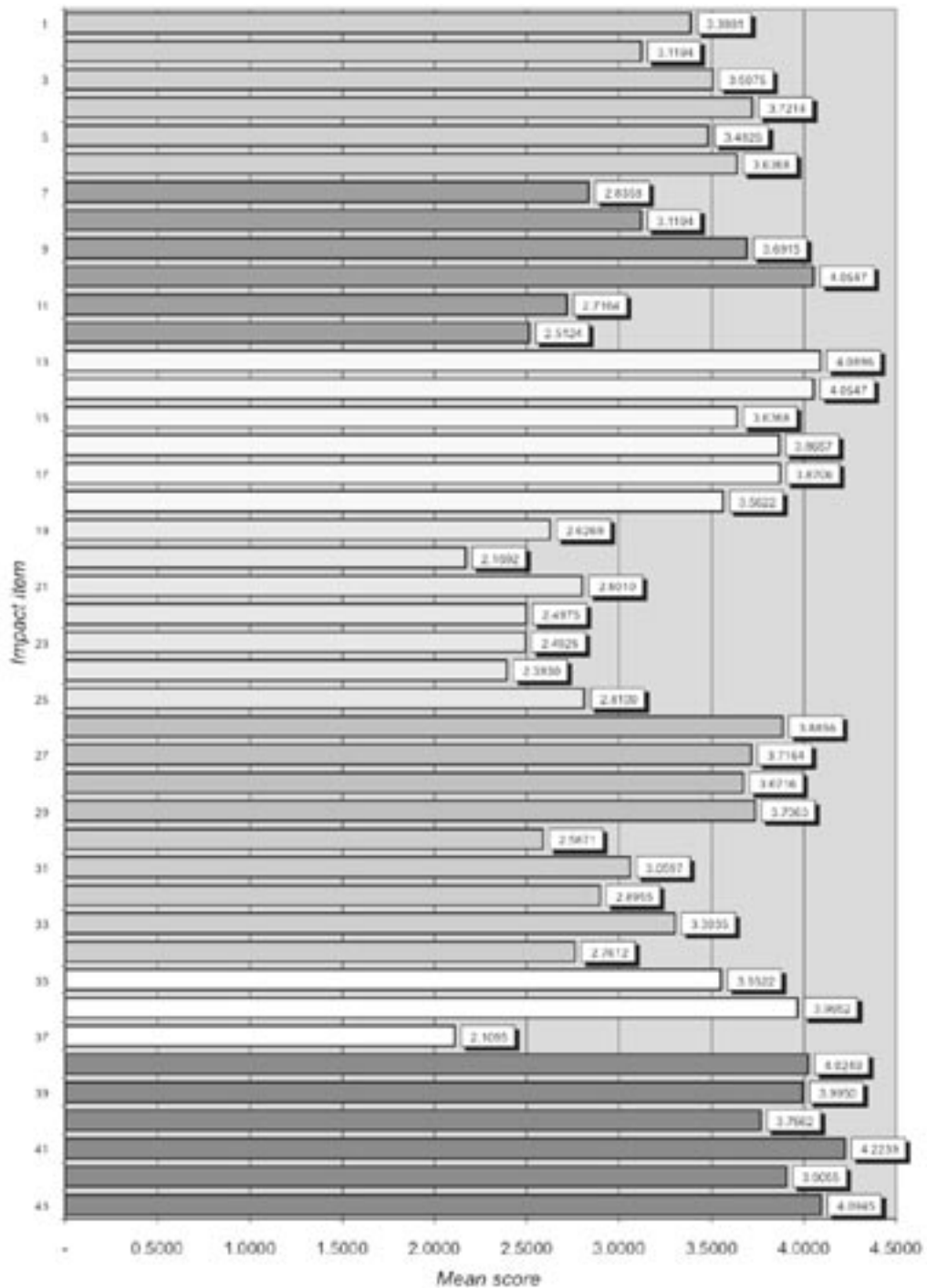


Figure 4. Mean scores of respondents' ratings

Table 3. Multiple regression of support for tourism development in CPNP

Independent Variables	$\beta$	$t$	Sig.
Age	-.141	-2,571	.011
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.152	2,801	.006
Positive socio-cultural impacts	.471	7,471	.000
Positive environmental impacts	.251	3,956	.000
Negative environmental impacts	.244	4,419	.000

Note:  $R^2 = .44$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .43$ ,  $F = 30.583$ ,  $p < .001$

<sup>a</sup>. Dummy coded: 0 = female, 1 = male

Table 3 shows the results of the multiple regressions pertaining to support for tourism development in CPNP. As can be seen from this table,  $R^2 = .44$ , and the adjusted  $R^2$  value for 5 out of 16 independent variables considered in the equation is .43, indicating that the model explains 43% of the variance in support of tourism development. According to Kinnear and Grey (2004), an  $R^2$  value greater than .10 is considered to be a large effect size.

In particular, the CPNP respondents in support of tourism development were found to have the following perceptions and socio-demographic characteristics:

- + The younger the respondent, the more likely he or she was to support tourism development.
- + Males were more supportive of tourism development than females.
- + Respondents who believed that tourism has positive socio-cultural impacts tended to support tourism development.
- + Respondents who believed that tourism has positive environmental impacts tended to support tourism development.
- + Finally and interestingly, respondents who believed that tourism has negative environmental impacts also supported tourism development.

It is worth noting that only two out of the nine socio-demographic variables entered the regression equation. Other socio-demographic variables such as ethnicity, place of birth, marital status, level of education, monthly household income, job status, and length of residency did not have a shared effect on the residents' support for tourism development. Interestingly, the other variables that did not have a combined effect on the support levels included the residents' perceptions of positive/negative economic impacts of tourism, their perceptions of negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism, and their evaluation of tourism impact.

This finding is also consistent with the first finding of this study, which signifies that

residents in CPNP consider positive socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism to be more important than positive economic impacts of tourism, which implies that they do not support tourism development merely due to its economic aspects. Furthermore, this finding corroborates the findings by Andereck and Vogt (2000) and King, Pizam, and Milman (1993), who concluded that support for tourism development could be associated with the belief that tourism induced positive as well as negative impacts. Despite their awareness of tourism's negative impacts, the local residents still support tourism development. The findings also allow us to reject the hypothesis of the study, which assumes that the independent variables (residents' socio-demographic characteristics, perceptions of tourism impacts, and evaluation of tourism impacts) do not significantly explain the dependent variables (residents' support for tourism development).

The findings also denote that the theoretical perspective of this research, the social exchange theory, was helpful in explaining residents' perceptions of and support for tourism development. Residents in CPNP perceive greater positive impacts of tourism than negative ones, due to which they largely support tourism development in CPNP.

## 5. Implications of the Study

This study attempted to contribute to the existing body of work on local residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, their evaluation of tourism impacts, and their support for tourism development. The study also contributes to the development of a research instrument to determine these aspects; this research instrument may form a useful measurement tool for other researchers seeking to assess local residents' perceptions of tourism in different geographical areas, especially in Vietnam, where research instruments like this one are still scarce.

The conceptual framework developed and tested in this research offers a theoretical basis for the study of tourism impacts and local support for tourism development. Further testing of residents' perceptions in different areas using this conceptual framework can provide more comprehensive grounds for the comparative study of a variety of residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and support for tourism development. The addition of new variables to the framework may further elucidate these aspects.

This study also further validates the theoretical predominant in the field of tourism research by confirming the usefulness of the social exchange theory in explaining residents' perceptions of tourism. The findings reveal that when residents perceive that the positive impacts of tourism (regardless of whether they are economic, socio-cultural, or environmental impacts) are likely to be greater than the negative impacts, they are inclined to accept the exchange and, therefore, support tourism development in their

Perceptions of tourism impact and tourism development among residents of Cuc Phuong National Park, Ninh Binh, Vietnam community.

One prominent finding of this study is that residents in CPNP valued the socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism higher than its economic impacts, and they supported tourism development, in general, but not merely for its economic benefits, unlike the findings of the earlier studies. Consequently, this study obtained its significant results in the realm of residents' perceptions of and attitudes toward tourism research, showing that depending on the residents' socio-demographic characteristics, extent of tourism's influence, and different geographical areas, the local residents' perceptions of and attitudes toward tourism may differ; residents generally tend to support tourism if they feel that tourism brings them more benefits than costs (regardless of whether these are socio-cultural, environmental, or economic benefits). In CPNP, residents value the social-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism over its economic impacts (because most of them are still dependent on the park's resources and they have not received significant economic benefits from tourism so far); however, if a similar study is conducted in other destinations, the findings may be different.

This research provides tourism planners, policy makers, tourism strategists, and tourism promoters with helpful information about local residents' perceptions and evaluations of tourism impacts and their support for tourism development; this information can be used to formulate plans and policies not only to gain residents' support for tourism but also to implement sustainable tourism development. The more attentive tourism leaders are to residents' concerns, the greater the support they are likely to receive in their community development efforts (Ramchander, 2004). The study findings reveal that at the time of this research, CPNP residents tended to have positive perceptions of tourism and that they largely supported tourism development, especially due to its socio-cultural and environmental impacts. However, to maintain sustainable tourism, it is necessary to take into account a long-term perspective of residents' perceptions of tourism. Furthermore, it is important to involve residents in both tourism-related decision-making processes and the tourism activity itself, since the findings indicate the local residents' willingness to be involved and participate in these activities. The researcher's observations suggest that thus far, the local residents — particularly the Muongs — have very limited involvement in such activities (participating in tourism as the hosts of homestays, selling goods and services, etc.).

## 6 . Suggestions for Future Research and Conclusion

Although the local residents' views are critical for analyzing tourism development, in that the greatest impacts of the tourism industry are experienced and judged by the host

residents (Andriotis, 2000), further research should investigate the perceptions of tourism organization managers and local authorities to identify the real concerns and conflicts pertaining to tourism development in CPNP. Such information would lead to a better understanding of the tourism structure in CPNP and help the relevant authorities formulate effective tourism development plans and policies.

This study examined the factors and variables that explained local residents' perceptions and evaluation of tourism impacts and their support for tourism development. In order to further understand "why" and "how" the CPNP residents' react to tourism development in a particular manner (that is, why and how residents perceive a specific impact as positive or negative), it is necessary to analyze additional data using qualitative methods in order to collect more insightful and comprehensive information.

The research instrument and conceptual framework developed and tested in this research can be expanded and tested in other geographical locations to identify and examine other variables and factors that may influence the residents' abovementioned opinions. Such information will be useful in providing more comparative results and findings in this topic.

In conclusion, let us reflect on McGehee and Andereck's (2004:139) views that "a great deal of progress has been made in the study of residents' attitudes towards tourism, but a great deal is left to be done. No matter what future direction resident attitude research takes, the most important goal must be to assure that the varied voices of the community are heard."

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