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## Understanding the Relationships among Destination Social Responsibility, Resident Benefits, Trust and Support for Tourism Development

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**Abstract:** Based on the stakeholder theory, the cognitive-emotional-behavioral theory and the social exchange theory, this study constructs an effect mechanism model of destination social responsibility on resident support for tourism development which takes resident benefits and trust as mediators. Through surveying the residents of the ancient Fenghuang City of Hunan, a famous ancient destination in China, to get the basic data, the Structural Equation Model (SEM) method is adopted to conduct an empirical test on the theory model. The empirical research results show that destination social responsibility has a significant, direct and positive effect on resident benefits and trust and an indirect impact on resident support for tourism development through resident benefits and trust. Resident benefits and trust have a significant and positive influence on resident support for tourism development respectively which proves their full mediating roles in the influence of destination social responsibility on resident support for tourism development. The study also points out the research limitations and future research directions.

**Key words:** Destination, destination social responsibility, resident benefits, resident trust, support for tourism development, mediating role

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### INTRODUCTION

As the resident is the core stakeholder of destination, their attitudes and behaviors, especially their support for tourism development, are of great importance to the development of destination (Nicholas *et al.*, 2009). According to the stakeholder theory, destination's acts of social responsibility will benefit their stakeholders which mean that the residents there will benefit from it. According to the social exchange theory, after destination residents get benefits, they will support the development of destination. But the literature shows that the relationship between of them hasn't attracted the attention of researchers.

The above analysis shows that both destination social responsibility and resident support are beneficial to the development of destination. So do they have anything to do with each other? And what's the relationship between them? Interacting or separating? Obviously, answers to these questions are of both important theoretical significance and practical significance. However, to these questions, there lack in-depth discussions in the academic circle. So, based on the stakeholder theory and the cognitive-emotional-behavioral theory, this study constructs an impact mechanism model of destination social responsibility on

resident support for tourism development which take resident benefits and trust as mediators, with the residents of the ancient Fenghuang City in Hunan Province-a famous ancient destination in China as the research object, so as to verify the effect mechanism. This study theoretically takes destination residents as the research object to discuss the impact mechanism of destination social responsibility on the attitudes and behaviors of the residents there which enables to expand the study range of the social responsibility and resident support of the existing destination and practically clarifies the relationship between the social responsibility and the resident support for tourism development, so as to reduce the conflicts during the destination development and provide a guidance to the construction of a harmonious tourism community as part of the construction of a harmonious society.

### CONSTRUCTION OF THEORETICAL BASIS AND THEORETICAL MODEL

#### Definition of concepts

**Destination social responsibility:** In a creative article, Carroll (1979) defined corporate social responsibility as a concept of "the social expectation on organizational discretion in terms of including economy, laws, morals

and a specific period of time". In his definition, these responsibilities were fulfilled not only for the interests of an enterprise itself but also for the interests of the whole society. That is, the enterprises that survived in this way could be deemed as entering into a social contract which forced them to take social interests into consideration when making decisions. Although the concept of social responsibility has been widely discussed in much literature, most researches hold that the main social responsibility of an enterprise is the economic/productive product or service. Meanwhile, an enterprise also has the responsibility to handle the legal and ethical standards measured by the society. Maignan and Ferrell (2001) proposed a widely acceptable definition, taking the corporate social responsibility as "the economic, legal and moral responsibility considered in the business activities of an enterprise to some extent as required by the corporate stakeholders" which was used to "reflect the social demands and the active participation of the enterprise in the social activities beyond the minimum standards of economic, legal and moral responsibility". Social responsibility can be classified by scope into a broad sense and a narrow sense. The corporate social responsibility in a broad sense refer to "the behaviors that go beyond the corporate interests lawfully for the further development of the society while the corporate social responsibility in a narrow sense attach importance to the wealth maximization of stakeholders. The changes in these concepts reflect the different responsibility of corporate roles that go beyond the economic system. In this study, the broad sense is adopted to define destination social responsibility as the "status and activities" applied to all its stakeholders (including tourists, employees, community residents, investors, governments, suppliers and competitors) upon the perception of its social obligations. In this definition, a destination has the obligation to "protect and improve the social and organizational interests of the whole destination". Destination social responsibility includes environmental, social, economic, stakeholders and voluntary responsibility.

**Resident benefits:** Due to the comprehensiveness of tourism activities, the influences of the development of destinations are extensive, including economic, social, cultural and environmental influences. The economic influence of tourism is the most valuable influencing factor of tourism to communities. Tourism can improve local economy, increase local income, improve the living standard, bring about new business opportunities and create investment opportunities. Tourism can also enrich community elements, protect cultural values and improve

self-respect; tourism can also improve the living standard of local residents, create new chances, promote social innovations, create flexible work modes, provide women with new work opportunities and improve security.

According to the research results, the influences brought about by the development of destinations include positive influences and negative influences (Dyer *et al.*, 2007). As the core stakeholders of destination, the residents there are surely subject to the influence of the development of destination (Milman and Pizam, 1988), including the positive ones and the negative ones. The positive influences caused by the development of destination will bring about corresponding benefits to residents of destination. So, in this study, resident benefits is defined as the various benefits the residents of destination get due to the positive influences of the development of destination, including economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits.

**Resident trust:** Trust is the precondition of interpersonal communication and the foundation of the development of interpersonal relations. According to many social psychologists, trust is indispensable to interpersonal relations (Butler, 1983). In marketing literature, there are lots of studies about customers' trust which is regarded as an important indicator of enterprise-customer relations. In addition to its indispensable role in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relations, trust enables more open communications, more satisfaction and higher performing dyads (Butler, 1983). Trust can be divided into general trust and contextual trust. General trust refers to the trust in the partners regarding their oral commitments and their fulfillment of their obligations in trading, namely about the tendency that one trusts others. Contextual trust refers to the trust subject to the actual conditions in specific situations, including the subjective and objective features of the situations.

According to the definition of trust in marketing, the resident trust is defined in this study as their trust that destination and the tourism agency and are willing to provide measures and services that can meet their needs during the development of destination, Resident trust is an important basis of the good relationship between destination and the residents.

**Resident support for tourism development:** As the important stakeholders of the tourism development, local residents are critical to the development of destination. It is just because of the importance of resident support that there have been some studies about it (Nicholas *et al.*, 2009). But there have been few definitions about it. In the past, some studies defined residents' attitudes towards

tourism by measuring the positive and negative influences of tourism (Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012). Although resident support for tourism development is usually interpreted as attitudes towards tourism, some researchers think that resident support for tourism is a kind of behavioral tendency or behavior of residents on tourism development (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2010). Behaviors of such residents are based on their cognition of tourism influences which result in their support for or objection against tourism development. Consistent with these studies, we base on the positive influences of residents on tourism to handle residents' attitudes and think that resident support for tourism means the active attitudes or support behaviors of residents on tourism development. This kind of conceptual resident support turns the stakeholder theory, the cognitive-emotional-behavioral theory and the social exchange theory into the reasonable frameworks to analyze the effect mechanism of destination social responsibility on resident support for tourism development.

#### **Construction of theoretical model**

**Influences of destination social responsibility:** The stakeholder theory shows that in addition to realize maximum benefits, enterprises have motives to realize their other objectives. On the basis of this theory, some enterprises take social responsibility plan as a way to promote corporate social responsibility and policies and an effective response to the demands of stakeholders (Maignan and Ferrell, 2004). The motives satisfying the demands of stakeholders originate from the interest pursuit possibility of stakeholders, enterprise survival, economy, subjective sense of happiness, competitive advantages, target customer trust and loyalty development. Lots of evidence support that enterprises invest on social responsibility will have positive influences on the stakeholder group (Pirsch *et al.*, 2007). In our opinion, the main purpose of destination social responsibility is to meet the benefit pursuit of all stakeholders. As the people related to core interests of destination, residents of destination will benefit accordingly from destination social responsibility. It can be seen that destination social responsibility has a positive influence on resident benefits, so we propose the following hypotheses:

**H1a:** Destination social responsibility has a positive influence on resident benefits

Researchers adopted many methods to discuss the influences of corporate social responsibility on consumer trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001) and think that

corporate social responsibility is an important decisive factor of consumer trust (Pivato *et al.*, 2008). Doney and Cannon (1997) define consumers' cognition of corporate social responsibility as the corporate commitment to respect consumers' rights and interests. The research result of Pivato *et al.* (2008) also proves that the activities of corporate social responsibility can create consumer trust. Castaldo *et al.* (2009) divide consumers' cognition of corporate social responsibility into consumer dimension, namely to absorb consumers to trust retail products and environmental dimension, namely organic product label reaches the standards of organic products and thus win consumers' trust, so there are significant relationships between them. We think that the behavior that destination adopts social responsibility meets the interest pursuit of residents of destination and thus it is beneficial to the occurrence of the sense of trust among them. So, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H1b:** Destination social responsibility has a positive effect on resident trust

In literatures of marketing and organizational behavior, lots of studies show that corporate social responsibility affect people's attitudes and behaviors (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). Krystallis and Chrysohoidis (2005) found that in fact customers are willing to pay a premium and depend on trust. In the basic level, the corporate social responsibility plan is regarded as customers' willingness to buy enterprise products (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). As a matter of fact, consumer purchase tendency is regarded as positively related to the moral behaviors of enterprise beyond their expectations (Creyer, 1997). In general, consumers provide more supports to enterprises undertaking social and environmental responsibility (Creyer, 1997; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). Resident support of destination is based on residents' cognition of and attitudes towards the influences of local tourism. Seen from the perspective of residents of destination, destination social responsibility refer to their cognition of destination social responsibility during the operation and management of destination, so destination social responsibility is the antecedent of resident support. So, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H1c:** Destination social responsibility has a positive influence on resident support for tourism development

**Influences of resident benefits:** Judgment of the past is based on its own gains and losses, when business partner

feels that he has obtained great interests in previous sides, it will be beneficial to the occurrence of the sense of trust. On the contrary, when a partner suffered losses in previous business relationship, he will be disappointed which will not be beneficial to the occurrence of the sense of trust (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987). According to stakeholder theory, residents of destination are people closely related to the core interests of destination. When destination provides residents with the interests beyond their expectations, it will reduce residents' cognition of risks about the development of destination. So they will easily have the sense of trust on the development of destination. It is true likewise. So, it shows that resident benefits are beneficial to the occurrence of resident trust. So, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H2a:** Resident benefits has a positive effect on resident trust

In general, studies show that there is positive relationship between resident benefits and resident support (Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004; Lee *et al.*, 2010; Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2010; Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012). Gursoy and Kendall (2006) find that resident support for large activities is affected by perceived benefits which are positively related to resident support. Perdue *et al.* (1990) find that the active influences of tourism development are positively related to resident support. According to stakeholder theory and empirical conclusions of literature, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H2b:** Resident benefits have a positive influence on resident support for tourism development.

**Influence of resident trust:** Raimondo *et al.* (2008) constructed the relationship model of the influences of customer satisfaction, trust and relation justice on customer loyalty, made a survey of Italian mobile customers and found that customer trust has positive influences on attitude loyalty and behavior loyalty. Kim *et al.* (2011), in the environment of online purchase of tourism products, analyzed the relationships among customer satisfaction, customer trust and customer loyalty and found that customer trust has positive influences on customer loyalty. Keeling *et al.* (2010), in the environment of retailers, made a survey of 636 customers from Eastern Coast of America, the Oceania and Europe and found that the trust in salespersons has positive influences on customer repurchase tendency. Keh and Xie (2009) made a survey of 351 customers of China's B2B service enterprises and found customer trust has positive influences on repurchase tendency.

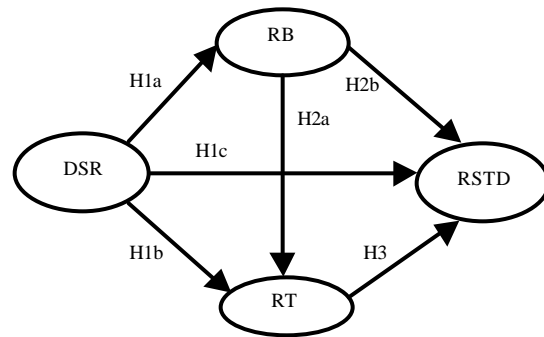


Fig. 1: Research theory model. DSR means destination social responsibility; RB means resident benefits; RT means resident trust; RSTD: Means resident support for tourism development

During the process of destination, when residents of destination have the sense of trust in destination, it means that they are willing to establish relationships with destination and this relationship will affect their future attitudes and behaviors, including the support for the development of destination, so we propose the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Resident trust has a positive influence on resident support for tourism development.

The research theory model constructed in this text is as shown in Fig. 1.

### QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

**Questionnaire design:** The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part is about the demographic characteristics of destination residents, including gender, age, residence years, income level and cultural degree, etc; the second part is about the questions of four latent variables (destination social responsibility, resident benefits, resident trust and resident support) involved in the research theory model. Among them, there are 4 questions about destination social responsibility which originated from the research of Sen and Bhattacharya (2001). There are 3 items about resident benefits which originated from the research results of Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012). There are 4 items about resident trust which are from the research of Keeling *et al.* (2010) and there are 3 items about resident support which are from the research result of Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012). The Likert Scale was adopted, in which “1” means complete disagreement and “5” means complete agreement. The higher the score is, the higher the agreement degree is.

**Data collection:** In this research, we collected data from the Fenghuang Ancient City in Hunan Province—a famous Chinese ancient city destination. The survey was conducted between January 10th and 30th 2013 and we made a random survey of local residents in several communities and surrounding villages of the ancient city. 400 questionnaires were distributed, 296 were collected and 272 were effective questionnaires. We input effective questionnaires into EXCEL to develop a database and adopted SPSS and AMOS software to conduct analysis of the data.

The demographic characteristics of the samples are balanced in gender, most respondents have degree of senior high school or assistant secondary education, they are of 18-44 years old, with average income of below 1999 ¥ and the period of residence of 11-20 years.

**EMPIRICAL ANALYSES**

**Analysis of measurement model**

**Fit index of measurement model:** It can be seen from the fit index of the measurement model in Table 1 that NFI and RFI didn't reach corresponding standards and all other fit index have reached or exceeded corresponding standards and thus we know that the measurement model is a very good model.

**Reliability test:** The overall Cronbach alpha value of the Likert Scale is 0.894 and the Cronbach alpha value of all latent variables of the Likert Scale is 0.745~0.870, bigger than the standard of 0.70. It can be seen from Table 2 that the composite reliability of all latent variables is 0.826~0.917, much bigger than 0.70. It can be seen that the Likert Scale adopted in our research has adequate reliability.

**Validity test:** It can be seen from Table 2 that the factor load of all the questions is 0.640~0.930 which is significant below the level of 0.001 and the average variance extracted is 0.511~0.613, bigger than 0.50 which illustrates that this research has adequate convergent validity to the measurement of latent variables. Except relevant coefficient (0.741) of destination social responsibility and resident benefits are bigger than the AVE square root of some latent variables (destination social responsibility, resident benefits and resident support), all the other relevant coefficients are smaller than the AVE square root of latent variables which thus illustrates that the validity of the latent variables is good.

**Analysis of structural model**

**Fitness index of structural model:** It can be seen from the fit index of the theoretical model in Table 1 that  $\chi^2/df$  is smaller than 3; RMSEA is smaller than 0.08; GFI, IFI, TLI and CFI are bigger than or equal to 0.900 and AGFI, NFI and RFI are all above 0.850. So, the fit index shows that the structural model is a model that can be basically accepted.

**Research hypothesis testing:** The results show destination social responsibility has a positive influence on resident benefits and resident trust, resident benefits has a positive influence on resident trust and resident trust has a positive influence on resident support while destination social responsibility and resident benefits has no effect on resident support, thus the research hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2a and H3 are proved, but H1c and H2b are rejected.

**Updating of structural model:** In order to have good fit between data and model so as to get a better model, we

Table 1: Fit index of measurement model

	$\chi^2$	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI
Measurement model	2.328	0.069	0.904	0.866	0.895	0.870	0.937	0.922	0.937
Theoretical model	2.417	0.072	0.900	0.861	0.885	0.859	0.929	0.912	0.928
Correction model	2.071	0.063	0.916	0.882	0.907	0.885	0.950	0.937	0.949

Table 2: Analysis result of measurement model

Latent variables	Observed variables	Standardized load	Standard error	T value	Composite reliability	Cronbach alpha value	AVE
DSR	DSR1	0.702	0.047	12.284	0.876	0.798	0.511
	DSR2	0.640	0.059	10.904			
	DSR3	0.789	0.044	14.356			
	DSR4	0.721	0.045	12.738			
RP	RP1	0.708	0.047	12.671	0.903	0.843	0.520
	RP2	0.754	0.046	13.803			
	RP3	0.675	0.049	11.890			
RT	RT1	0.712	0.057	12.700	0.917	0.870	0.613
	RT2	0.733	0.049	13.230			
	RT3	0.863	0.051	16.710			
	RT4	0.814	0.051	15.388			
RS	RS1	0.669	0.047	11.501	0.826	0.805	0.606
	RS2	0.930	0.055	16.913			
	RS3	0.712	0.053	12.337			

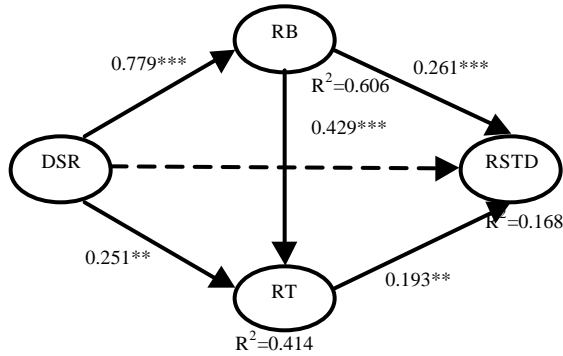


Fig. 2: Updating model. The dotted line in the figure means that the path is insignificant below the significant level of 0.05, \*\*means is significant at the level of 0.05 and \*\*\*means is significant at the level of 0.01

conducted appropriate modification of the structural model in the premise that is not against the theoretical basis. The correction method is to gradually delete the failing paths according to the modified index, until all paths are significant and the final results are as shown in Fig. 2.

It can be seen from the fit index of the modified model in Tab. 1 that is  $\chi^2/df$  smaller than 2; RMSEA is smaller than 0.08; GFI, NFI, IFI, TLI and CFI are all bigger than 0.900 and AGFI and RFI are close to 0.900 and they are all better than the structural model. So, seen from the fit index, the modified model is a very good model.

It can be seen from variable R<sup>2</sup> in Fig. 2 that the R<sup>2</sup> of resident benefits is 0.600, the R<sup>2</sup> of resident trust is 0.415 and the R<sup>2</sup> of resident support reached 0.183 which show that the variables of the model have a reliable relationship, well reflecting their relationships.

It can be seen from specific paths of the variables that destination social responsibility has a positive influence on resident benefits ( $\lambda_{21} = 0.779$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and resident trust ( $\lambda_{31} = 0.251$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); resident benefits has a significant positive influence on resident trust ( $\beta_{32} = 0.429$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and resident support ( $\beta_{42} = 0.261$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) respectively and resident trust has a significant positive influence on resident support ( $\beta_{43} = 0.193$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) while destination social responsibility has no significant direct influence on resident support.

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

**Roles of destination social responsibility:** Destination social responsibility mean that destination is responsible for all its stakeholders during the operation and management process and tries to meet all their interest

pursuits, including economic, social and environmental aspects. According to the stakeholder theory, residents of destination as the people closely related to the core interests of destination will benefit corresponding interests from destination social responsibility, but existing literature lack empirical discussions about their relationships. This study shows that destination social responsibility has a positive influence on resident benefits and this research result is quite similar to the research conclusion of Pirsch *et al.* (2007) which illustrates that destination social responsibility is of great significance to local residents and reflects that resident benefits corresponding interests from the tourism development, so it is a good choice to let destination undertake corresponding social responsibility.

Destination social responsibility covers all its stakeholders, including residents of destination. So, resident cognition of destination social responsibility is beneficial to the increase of resident trust in destination. This theoretical prediction also win the support of empirical conclusion that destination social responsibility has a significant positive influence on resident trust, the research result of which is quite similar to that of Pivato *et al.* (2008) and Castaldo *et al.* (2009). The fact that destination social responsibility has a positive influence on resident trust shows that it is an effective measure to undertake corresponding social responsibility to make residents have a sense of trust and establish a good relationship.

Empirical research results show that destination social responsibility has no direct influence on resident support, but has an indirect influence through the two mediating variables of resident benefits and resident trust. This result shows that in order to obtain resident support through the acts of social responsibility, residents need to obtain practical benefits from destination's acts of social responsibility, so as to promote them to have the sense of trust in destination. The complete meditating roles of resident benefits and resident trust show that the cognitive-emotional-behavioral theory is also applicable in the tourism context which broadens the application boundary of the theory.

The influences of destination social responsibility on resident benefits, resident trust and residents support show that destination undertake corresponding social responsibility. On the one hand, this can make residents share the development results of destination and obtain corresponding interests and reflects the important social significance of destination social responsibility. On the other hand, it can obtain resident support from the development of destination and provide help for the sustainable development of destination which reflects the

important economic significance of destination social responsibility. The two aspects suggest that destination social responsibility is not only beneficial to the development of destination, but also beneficial to the construction of a harmonious tourism community and realizes the win-win situation of destination and residents.

**Roles of resident benefits:** The development of destination brought about all-round influences on local economy, society and environment, etc. (Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004; Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012). According to stakeholder theory, residents as important stakeholders of destination will obtain corresponding interests from destination social responsibility (Lee *et al.*, 2010). According to social exchange theory, this interest relationship will become a bridge of the relationship between destination and residents. The more benefits residents get, the more sense of trust they will have on destination. The results of empirical prove this deduction and the development of resident benefits has a significant positive influence on resident trust. So, in order to obtain resident trust of destination, it is a very important measure for residents to obtain corresponding interests during the development process of destination.

Empirical studies show that resident benefits have a significant positive influence on resident support tourism development. So, to make residents obtain corresponding interests is an effective measure to motivate them to support the development of destination. This illustrates that destination makes residents participate in and share the results of tourism development and make them obtain corresponding interests, so residents will support the development of destination as a return. In this way, it will develop a good circle and realize the win-win situations between destination and residents. It can be seen that during the development process of destination, we should establish a kind of good interest-sharing mechanism and make all stakeholders including residents of destination share the results of tourism development and promote them to repay destination by supporting the tourism development of destination.

**Relationship between resident trust and resident support for tourism development:** Empirical studies have proved this deduction, finding that resident trust has a significant positive influence on resident support for tourism development and this conclusion is quite similar to the fact that marketing scholars find that customer trust has a positive influence on customer loyalty (Keh and Xie, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2011). The positive influences that resident trust has an effect on resident support for tourism development shows that it is an important

method and measure to develop good relationships with residents and obtain resident trust and thus promote residents to support the development of destination. So, administrators of destination should establish smooth communication channels with residents, timely inform residents of the development situations of destination so as to obtain their trust and thus obtain their support for the tourism development and construct a harmonious tourism community.

## RESEARCH LIMITS AND FUTURE RESEARCH ORIENTATION

Through theoretical analysis and empirical testing, we get some important research results. However, due to some restrictions, we still have some research limitations which will become important research directions in the future. First, in this research, we only took a survey of the Fenghuang Ancient City in Hunan. Relatively speaking, the interest-sharing mechanism of this destination is good and residents can obtain lots of benefits from the development of destination. So, in future, we will conduct a survey of destinations where residents have few benefits from tourism development, so as to test the validity of the research results. Second, in marketing literature, some studies show that social responsibility is a multi-dimensional concept (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). The purpose of this study is to test the overall relationships between destination and other several variables. So, there is no analysis of specific dimensions. In future research, we can develop a scale for destination social responsibility and test the relationships between dimensions and other variables of the model. Third, the data in this study are sectional data. In order to better reflect the relationships of the variables in the model, we can make sampling at intervals in future research, obtain column data and conduct diachronic comparative study.

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