



Chinese cultural values influence residents' sense of empowerment at sustainable tourism destinations

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Although community empowerment is an important component of sustainable tourism, few studies have examined how empowerment influences residents' support for sustainable tourism at nature-based destinations. We formed a conceptual framework to investigate the moderating effect of Chinese cultural values in the relationship between residents' perceived empowerment and their support for sustainable tourism. We collected 794 survey responses from residents of communities at a nature-based tourism destination in China. Results show there was a significant relationship between empowerment and support for sustainable tourism. The moderating role of cultural values was partially supported. Our findings provide implications on how to better empower residents with an East Asian cultural background, to make sustainable tourism achievable and maintainable.

Keywords

perceived empowerment;
nature-based tourism;
cultural values;
sustainable tourism;
community residents

Article Highlights

- We explored the impact of Chinese cultural values on residents' empowerment in nature-based tourism.
- The Chinese cultural values of human–nature orientation and relationship orientation were found to impact on residents' empowerment in relation to sustainable tourism.
- Implications are described for how to make sustainable tourism achievable by increasing residents' sense of empowerment.

Empowerment is an important concept in studies focused on tourism sustainability (Boley & McGehee, 2014; Cole, 2006; Scheyvens, 1999), and it is widely accepted that empowered residents are key actors for tourism sustainability (Joo et al., 2020). *Empowerment* is defined as the outcome of “a process, a mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs” (Rappaport, 1987, p. 122). Choi and Murray (2010) argued that “if government fails to empower residents, the success of tourism development and sustainability cannot be guaranteed” (p. 598). Previous studies have also shown that empowerment is a key factor for residents' support for sustainable tourism, and political, psychological, and social empowerment can lead residents to pay more attention to noneconomic effects of tourism, such as social and cultural resources, rather than solely financial gains (Boley et al., 2014; Joo et al., 2020; Strzelecka, Boley, & Strzelecka, 2017; Strzelecka, Boley, & Woosnam, 2017). However, empowerment is a complex concept that is usually entangled with local culture and values. Every community may differ in



terms of culture and norms (McCool & Bosak, 2016). The culture affects the frequency of the occurrence of empowerment through the values and norms and the communication environment (Coy et al., 2021), which could significantly affect the power dynamics and decision-making patterns of residents. To understand how residents in communities can be encouraged to engage with sustainable tourism, researchers should consider indigenous communities' cultural norms and values. However, no previous studies have focused on how to align resident empowerment with cultural values to achieve greater resident support for sustainable tourism.

In this study we sought to address this knowledge gap by investigating how Chinese cultural values influence residents' empowerment and their intention to prevent tourists from damaging the environment. The concept of empowerment was developed in the Western context, but community empowerment has also been investigated in, for example, the Japanese context (Boley et al., 2015). However, no studies have examined how specific cultural values influence residents' sense of empowerment. In this study we investigated how Chinese cultural values impact on residents' sense of empowerment and their support for sustainable tourism. This study will provide a better understanding of residents' active contribution to the sustainability of nature-based tourism.

Nature-Based Tourism and Residents' Support for Sustainable Tourism

Nature-based tourism refers to "activities by humans occurring when visiting nature areas outside the person's ordinary neighborhood" (Fredman et al., 2009, pp. 24–25). To achieve sustainability, a common strategy in nature-based tourism is to fully involve local communities (Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010). Several studies have investigated interactions between local communities and tourists to maintain the long-term sustainability of nature-based tourism. For example, Wray et al. (2010) found that in Fiordland National Park in New Zealand, international tourists were viewed as a threat to local cultural identity and recreation opportunities, so that local communities were resistant to the changes caused by tourism development. In their study of Arctic communities Sisneros-Kidd et al. (2019) found that residents' attitudes influenced the resilience of communities dependent on nature-based tourism.

Consequently, the favorable attitudes and support from local communities are beneficial for tourism sustainability, including nature-based tourism. According to Lee and Jan (2019), the sustainability of nature-based tourism depends greatly in different stages of development on the sociocultural, environmental, and economic sustainability of local communities. It is critical to understand the factors involved in residents' support for sustainable tourism, because this support generates favorable outcomes for the community. For example, Gurung and Seeland (2008) suggested that community support can contribute to environmental conservation, economic development, cultural promotion, and good governance. Joo et al. (2020) also found that residents' support for tourism can lead to collective political action.

Viewing residents' intention to stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior as the consequence of residents' support for sustainable tourism, we put forward the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Residents' support for sustainable tourism will be positively associated with their intention to stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior.

Empowerment

Previous studies have classified empowerment into psychological, social, political, and economic facets (Boley et al., 2014; Strzelecka, Boley, & Strzelecka, 2017). In tourism, the most frequently used model of local community empowerment comes from Scheyvens (1999), who included economic, cultural, social, and political dimensions. To understand residents' empowerment in the tourism context, Boley et al. (2014) used Scheyvens' model to develop the Resident Empowerment Through Tourism Scale, which comprises three dimensions of resident empowerment: First, *psychological empowerment* relates to residents' sense of self-esteem and pride caused by the tourism initiatives (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014). Self-esteem and pride



arise when residents feel that tourists appreciate the value of natural resources and local culture (Scheyvens, 1999). The significance of psychological empowerment on residents' attitudes and support for tourism has been verified in several studies (Boley, Maruyama, et al., 2015; Boley, McGehee, et al., 2014; Joo et al., 2020). The positive emotions related to psychological empowerment have been viewed as the most important noneconomic benefit gained from tourism activities, which are essential for building sustainable tourism destinations (Scheyvens, 1999; Stronza & Gordillo, 2008).

Second, *social empowerment* is the outcome of the strengthened relationships among local residents and the increased community cohesion caused by tourism activities (Scheyvens, 1999). Tourism can promote social empowerment by providing more employment opportunities and bringing residents together (Strzelecka & Wicks, 2010), thereby enhancing their attitudes toward and support for tourism by improving their well-being.

Third, *political empowerment* refers to the political efficacy that residents perceive within the tourism planning and development process (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). This increases with greater participation in the decision-making process: When residents feel they have the power to control tourism development in their local areas, they tend to be more tolerant of the negative effects of tourism than when they feel that they do not have any power (Cole, 2006; Timothy, 2007).

Beyond the dimensions discussed above, Ramos and Prideaux (2014) extended Scheyvens' (1999) empowerment model by adding an environmental dimension. Ramos and Prideaux (2014) suggested that when people have environmental empowerment they support the conservation of community-managed lands and natural resources, which is significant for sustainable tourism. Aghazamani and Hunt (2017) found that environmentally empowered residents contribute to habitat rehabilitation. However, when residents feel they cannot control tourism operations and are unaware of the impact of tourism on local cultural and natural resources, environmental empowerment is unlikely to occur (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014).

The effect of residents' empowerment on their support for tourism has been investigated in several studies (Boley et al., 2014; Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Strzelecka, Boley, & Strzelecka, 2017; Strzelecka, Boley, & Woosnam, 2017; Styliadis et al., 2014). These studies found that the positive perceptions held by residents, influenced by their perceived empowerment, are a significant prerequisite for their support for tourism. Boley et al. (2014), Strzelecka, Boley, and Strzelecka (2017), and Strzelecka, Boley, and Woosnam (2017) found a direct relationship between residents' empowerment and their support for tourism. Empowerment is also crucial for sustainable tourism because empowered residents participate in activities to minimize the negative effects of tourism, so that tourism sustainability can be achieved and maintained. On the basis of the above discussion, we developed the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Psychological empowerment will be positively associated with residents' support for sustainable tourism.

Hypothesis 3: Social empowerment will be positively associated with residents' support for sustainable tourism.

Hypothesis 4: Political empowerment will be positively associated with residents' support for sustainable tourism.

Hypothesis 5: Environmental empowerment will be positively associated with residents' support for sustainable tourism.

Economic Benefit

Social exchange theory (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) is often applied in the tourism context to understand residents' perceptions. In line with this theory, if residents in host communities believe they can benefit from tourism without incurring intolerable costs, they tend to actively support tourism development and participate in exchanges with tourists. Residents usually consider economic benefits when deciding whether to become financially dependent on tourism activities (Gursoy et al., 2010). Lee (2013) found that perceived



economic benefits could positively affect residents' support for sustainable tourism, whereas perceived economic costs negatively influenced their support. Economic benefits from tourism activities can improve residents' quality of life, and their awareness of and satisfaction with nature-based tourism (Reimann et al., 2011). Hence, we proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Perceived economic benefit will be positively associated with residents' support for sustainable tourism.

Cultural Value Orientation

Cultural values are emotionally based beliefs and motivations to concrete behaviors (Haukeland et al., 2010). Cultural values significantly influence the perceived costs and benefits of tourism development (Matarasso, 2007). As communities are diverse in terms of the norms and values that each community holds (McCool & Bosak, 2016), understanding how culture affects residents' support for tourism is important. Support is critical for increasing residents' participation (Som et al., 2007). In nature-based tourism, tourists use resources that belong to the local communities' natural environment and that are usually related to local tradition and culture (Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010). The cultural and social background of residents has a significant effect on their perception of and attitude towards tourism (Aghazamani & Hunt, 2017). Understanding the role of cultural values contributes to residents' participation in preserving their culture and natural environment, and makes sustainable tourism development achievable (Sutawa, 2012).

Our focus in this study was on the Chinese context because Chinese people traditionally have a strong appreciation for natural landscapes, and nature-based tourism is of great importance to tourism in China (Gao et al., 2018). Chinese people's perception of nature-based tourism is affected by their viewpoint toward nature, which is rooted in cultural values (Xu et al., 2013). This implies that without understanding how Chinese people view nature, nature-based tourism cannot be developed effectively in this country. Moreover, Chinese cultural values are an effective ideological weapon for problem solving because they represent a clear and consistent values system across generations that influences Chinese people's thinking and behavior (Kindel, 1983). In the Chinese cultural values system, man–nature orientation and relationship orientation are the two most significant factors affecting people's view of their relationship with nature. *Man–nature orientation* is defined as the ability of an individual to live in harmony with nature; this suggests that people are a part of nature and should learn how to adapt to nature rather than overcome or master it (Wei, 1980). Those with high man–nature value orientation believe that they should not interfere with nature, but rather should develop a harmonious relationship with it (Diyah & Wijaya, 2017; Ko & Jin, 2017). People should, therefore, not hold on too tightly to what they have or to what they have lost. Man–nature value orientation has been found to be positively related to people's affective and cognitive responses toward ecological issues (Chan & Lau, 2000). Man–nature orientation has been applied in studies of green marketing, in which it has been found that people with a high (vs. low) man–nature value orientation are more concerned about environmental issues and tend to participate actively in proenvironmental activities (Chan, 2001; Mostafa, 2007; Van Liere & Dunlap, 1980).

The *relationship orientation* of Chinese people is rooted in the five cardinal relations of Confucius that guide Chinese social behavior: father and son, old and young, sovereign and minister, husband and wife, and between friends. The focus of relationship orientation is on the effects of social impact and social pressure. This causes Chinese people to act in line with social norms to maintain interpersonal relationships. Moreover, Chinese culture is collectivist in nature. For many Chinese people, protecting and enhancing social ties with others is a major concern (Yau, 1988). In some circumstances, Chinese people are willing to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of a larger social unit or the whole society. Although relationship orientation has rarely been investigated, the effect of subjective norms on environment-related behaviors is prominent (Bong et al., 2017; Han, 2015). In environmental studies, the social norm is supported as a principal factor that influences environment-related behaviors (Harland et al., 1999; Kaiser & Gutscher, 2003).



As a culture-based guideline of residents' attitudes and behavior (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003), empowerment can be viewed as a value orientation (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Warschausky, 1998). Residents' cultural and social background have a significant effect on their perceived empowerment and their support for tourism activities (Aghazamani & Hunt, 2017). Hence, we formed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 7: Cultural value orientation (man–nature relationship) will moderate the relationship between residents' empowerment and their support for sustainable tourism.

Method

Participants

Hainan Bawangling National Nature Reserve is known as the sole remaining natural habitat of *Nomascus hainanus*, a species of monkey (gibbon) found only in Hainan. With increasingly rapid development, the Bawangling area is known for its cultural (Li culture) and natural (rainforest and *Nomascus hainanus*) appeal. Data for this study were collected from residents of three towns around Hainan Bawangling National Natural Reserve. Between October and December 2020, we obtained 794 valid survey forms. The survey results were accurate within a sampling error of 5.12% and a confidence interval of 95% (Aaker, 1997). Chi-square (χ^2) and goodness-of-fit values were calculated to see whether the samples from each community could represent an equal percentage of the survey (Sarantakos, 2005). The quality of fit ($\chi^2 = 1.57$, $df = 2$, $p > .05$) shows that the sample was apportioned equally in the study. Among the participants there were 429 (54%) men and 365 (46%) women. As regards age, 25 were aged between 18 and 30 years (3.2%), 102 (12.8%) between 18 and 40 years, 167 (21.0%) between 41 and 50 years, 263 (33.1%) between 51 and 60 years, and 237 (29.9%) over 60 years. Among the participants, 572 (72%) were married and 222 (28%) were not married. In terms of educational qualifications, 57 (7.2%) had completed elementary school or less, 343 (43.2%) had completed junior high school, 196 (24.6%) had completed high school, 180 (22.7%) had a college degree, and 18 (2.3%) had a master's degree or higher qualification.

Measures

For each measure used, we reviewed studies in which the constructs were measured in similar contexts and then made appropriate wording changes to the items to make sure they fit the context of this study. Participants rated all items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*).

Empowerment

The formal survey included three items for psychological empowerment (e.g., "I am happy to tell tourists travelling to Bawangling Park about what we have to offer as a tourism destination"), four items for social empowerment (e.g., "Seeing tourists travelling to Bawangling Park makes me feel more connected to my community"), and four items for political empowerment (e.g., "I feel that my opinion makes a difference to policies on tourists in Bawangling Park"). These items were all adapted from Joo et al. (2020) and Strzelecka, Boley, and Strzelecka (2017). Four items for environmental empowerment were adapted from Ramos and Prideaux (2014). A sample item is "My opinions would have some impact on tourism sustainability in Bawangling Park."

Perceived Financial Benefit

We used four items adapted from Boley et al. (2014), Strzelecka, Boley, and Strzelecka (2017), and Strzelecka, Boley, and Woosnam (2017) to measure perceived financial benefit (e.g., "Tourism in Bawangling Park helps to increase my income").

Intention to Stop Tourists' Environmental Damaging Behavior

Four items adapted from Ajzen (1991) and Han and Yoon (2015) were used to measure intention to stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior (e.g., "I will remind tourists to behave in an environmentally friendly manner when traveling in Bawangling Park").



Chinese Cultural Values

We used four items adapted from Yau (1988) to measure relationship orientation (e.g., “I am eager to develop a harmonious relationship with the people around me”) and four items adapted from Chan (2001) to measure man–nature orientation (e.g., “Human beings need to understand the way of nature and act accordingly”).

Procedure

The participants completed a survey containing 35 items. We hired one resident in each community to help us choose residents as participants. These assistants had worked for local government and held a bachelor’s degree. We trained them to make sure they understood the procedure of data collection. They were instructed to ensure all the participants were mature inhabitants who had been living in their community for at least 10 years. The assistants distributed the survey forms by hand, waited while the participants completed all the items, then collected the completed forms. Thus, our study achieved a high response rate of 92%. Before testing the hypotheses, we carefully checked the data for any univariate or multivariate outliers by calculating Mahalanobis distance values and *z* scores. Survey forms containing outliers that could significantly impact the data analysis, such as giving the same response for each item, were removed before analysis. Missing values were tested by an expectation maximization algorithm. After that, the SmartPLS software package (version 3.3) was used to carry out data analysis. By establishing both measurement and structural models, the objective of structural equation modeling is to test complex relationships, including moderating effects (Hair et al., 2011). We initially tested the measurement model to validate the measurements. Once a good measurement model had been achieved, we performed a structural analysis to test the research model and the moderating effects.

Results

Measurement Model

First, we assessed the measurement model to ensure that it had a high level of reliability and validity. Cronbach’s alpha was used to test the internal consistency reliability of each construct. As shown in Table 1, Cronbach’s alphas for the constructs ranged from .87 to .91, suggesting that the measurement model had excellent internal consistency (Hair et al., 2011). We also evaluated the composite reliability, which is recommended as an alternative measure to partial least squares path modeling (Henseler et al., 2009). The values of composite reliability ranged from .90 to .93, showing the model had a high level of reliability.

Convergent validity was tested by inspecting the outer loading of each scale item on its prospective construct and calculating the average variance extracted (AVE). Hair et al. (2011) recommended that all factor loadings should be higher than .50. Table 1 shows that our factor loadings, which range from .80 to .94, met this requirement. The AVE values for the measurement model ranged from .71 to .79, all of which are higher than the threshold of .50. This implies that the measurement model has good convergent validity. Discriminant validity was measured against Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criteria, whereby a latent construct should share the greatest variance with its assigned indicators. The results of the discriminant validity test suggest that the measurement model had acceptable discriminant validity, as it met Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criteria (Table 2). We also calculated variance inflation factors to identify potential collinearity issues in the structural model. As shown in Table 1, no collinearity was identified because all variance inflation factors were lower than 5.



Table 1. Reliability and Validity of Scales

Construct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Factor loading	VIF	α	CR	AVE
Support for sustainable tourism	3.82	0.59	.81–.88	2.23–2.68	.90	.93	.73
Psychological empowerment	2.74	0.67	.87–.94	2.72–3.99	.88	.91	.74
Social empowerment	3.12	0.44	.81–.89	2.53–4.28	.88	.92	.79
Political empowerment	2.67	0.72	.88–.92	2.72–3.60	.91	.92	.79
Environmental empowerment	4.68	0.83	.80–.87	2.79–3.35	.89	.90	.70
Perceived economic benefit	4.32	0.65	.80–.90	2.76–3.17	.87	.93	.76
Intention to stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior	2.74	0.37	.81–.87	2.51–2.65	.91	.93	.71

Note. VIF = variance inflation factor; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Testing

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Support for sustainable tourism	.85						
2. Psychological empowerment	.81	.74					
3. Social empowerment	.43	.47	.71				
4. Political empowerment	.40	.37	.67	.87			
5. Environmental empowerment	.41	.44	.51	.56	.89		
6. Perceived economic benefit	.43	.42	.34	.42	.42	.87	
7. Intention to stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior	.40	.25	.46	.37	.53	.73	.82

Structural Equation Modeling

The fit of the structural equation model was tested by calculating adjusted R^2 values. As shown in Table 3, the model explained 72.2% of the variance in residents' support for sustainable tourism, which suggests that the this model could predict residents' support for sustainable tourism. The result for intention to stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior suggests the model had weak predictive power for residents' intention to stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior. We also performed Gesser's Q^2 test, which is a method used to assess the predictive validity of exogenous latent variables (Hair et al., 2011). The Q^2 values for both support for sustainable tourism and intention to stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior were greater than zero, indicating that the model had acceptable predictive validity.

Table 3. Results of R^2 and Q^2 Tests

	R^2	Adj. R^2	Q^2
Support for sustainable tourism	.72	.72	.25
Intention to stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior	.19	.20	.14

The nature and statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships were applied to test the research hypotheses. We used a nonparametric bootstrapping procedure to calculate t values on the basis of 794 cases, 5,000 resamples, and individual significance changes (Hair et al., 2011). As shown in Table 4 and Figure 1, all hypotheses were supported.

Table 4. *Hypothesis Testing Results*

Hypothesis	Path coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Supported or not
H1: Support for sustainable tourism → Intention to stop tourists environmental damaging behavior	.38	8.25	< .01***	Yes
H2: Psychological empowerment → Support for sustainable tourism	.12	3.26	< .01***	Yes
H3: Social empowerment → Support for sustainable tourism	.14	3.65	< .01***	Yes
H4: Political empowerment → Support for sustainable tourism	.14	3.41	< .01***	Yes
H5: Environmental empowerment → Support for sustainable tourism	.57	10.46	< .01***	Yes
H6: Economic benefit → Support for sustainable tourism	.08	2.16	.04**	Yes

Note. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

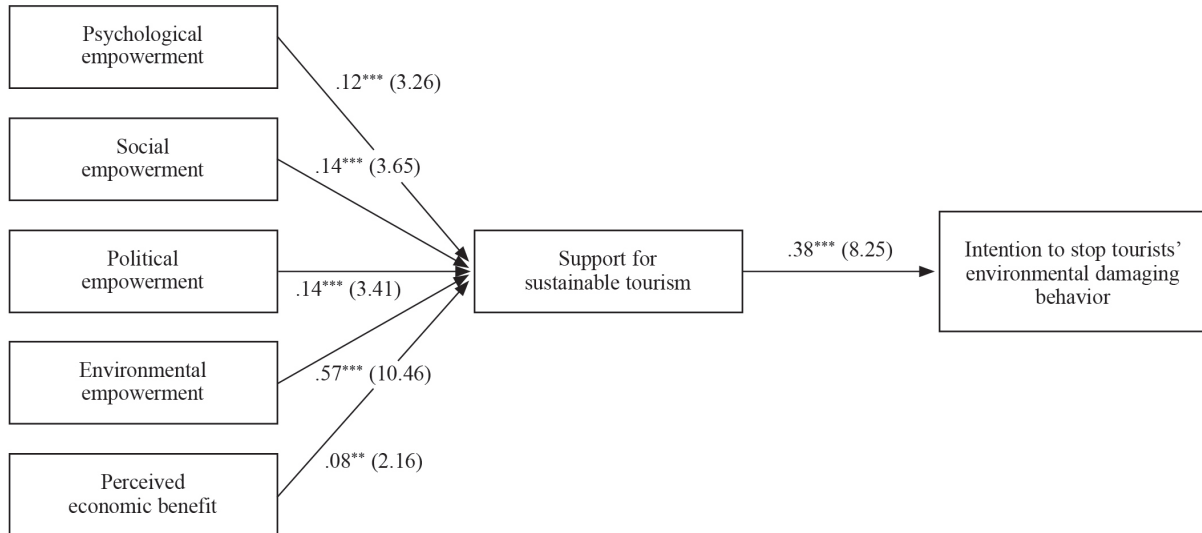


Figure 1. *Results of Structural Equation Modeling*

** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

We tested for the moderating effect of cultural value orientation using SmartPLS 3.3 software, following the partial least squares product-indicator approach, which can provide accurate estimates of the moderating effects by calculating the error that attenuates the estimated relationships (Henseler & Fassott, 2010). The hypothesis regarding the role of value orientation was partially supported, as man–nature orientation did not moderate the relationship between political empowerment and support for sustainable tourism. Furthermore, relationship orientation did not moderate the relationship between environmental empowerment and support for sustainable tourism (see Table 5).



Table 5. Results of Moderation Effects Testing

Hypothesis	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Supported
Psychological empowerment × Man–nature orientation → Support for sustainable tourism	2.84	< .01***	Yes
Social empowerment × Man–nature orientation → Support for sustainable tourism	2.44	.02**	Yes
Political empowerment × Man–nature orientation → Support for sustainable tourism	1.62	.11	No
Environmental empowerment × Man–nature orientation → Support for sustainable tourism	2.97	< .01***	Yes
Psychological empowerment × Relationship orientation → Support for sustainable tourism	2.29	.01**	Yes
Social empowerment × Relationship orientation → Support for sustainable tourism	3.98	< .01***	Yes
Political empowerment × Relationship orientation → Support for sustainable tourism	1.54	.12	No
Environmental empowerment × Relationship orientation → Support for sustainable tourism	2.77	< .01***	Yes

Note. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Discussion

Despite residents' perceived empowerment and support for tourism being central tenets of sustainable tourism research (Choi & Murray, 2010; Joo et al., 2020; Moswete & Lacey, 2015; Ramos & Prideaux, 2014; Strzelecka, Boley, & Strzelecka, 2017), and despite the widely acknowledged significance of traditions and cultural values in community management and control (McCool & Bosak, 2016; Simpson, 2008; Som et al., 2007), there has been little research conducted with a focus on how cultural values affect the relationship between residents' empowerment perceptions and their support for sustainable tourism. With this gap in mind, in this study we applied Boley et al.'s (2014) Resident Empowerment Through Tourism Scale and combined the Western concept of empowerment dimensions with traditional Chinese cultural value orientations to explore how cultural values influence residents' perception of empowerment and their support for sustainable tourism. This provides implications on how to better empower residents from an East Asian cultural background to make sustainable tourism achievable and maintainable.

The results of this study align with those of previous studies regarding the significant role of empowerment in residents' support for sustainable tourism (see, e.g., Joo et al., 2020; Strzelecka, Boley, & Strzelecka, 2017; Strzelecka, Boley, & Woosnam, 2017). Scholars have investigated how residents' perception of economic benefits and empowerment influence their support for tourism. The results of this study confirm the significance of economic, psychological, social, and political factors in the Chinese context. Further, we incorporated the concept of environmental empowerment, which is closely related to residents' support for land conservation and communally managed land (Ramos & Prideaux, 2014), but which has rarely been investigated in nature-based tourism studies. We found a direct and highly significant relationship between environmental empowerment and support for sustainable tourism, which implies that residents' sense of control over the land and local environment played a significant role in their perception of tourism sustainability.

Focusing on the sustainability of nature-based tourism, we tested residents' intention to stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior because of their support for sustainable tourism. Previous studies have suggested that empowered residents tend to participate actively in volunteer activities to maintain the local culture and environment (Coy et al., 2021; Joo et al., 2020), but limited scholarly attention has been paid to



volunteer behavior. Focusing on residents' intention to stop tourists' environmental damage, our results indicate that participants' support for sustainable tourism significantly affected their intervention with tourists. This suggests that when residents support the development of sustainable tourism, they participate in activities to help improve tourism sustainability, which is consistent with the results of Joo et al.'s (2020) study of residents' empowerment and their political action. According to Som et al. (2007), one barrier to sustainable tourism is that it is difficult to achieve wide public participation. We found that increasing residents' sense of empowerment can be effective in encouraging their active support and collaboration.

This study is a first attempt to link residents' empowerment with cultural values. Every community differs in terms of cultural values and norms (McCool & Bosak, 2016). Without a deep understanding of the local culture and values system, using tourism as an intervention could negate the benefits generated by increased income (McCool & Bosak, 2016). In China, culture has a significant influence on peoples' viewpoint towards nature (Gao et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2013). However, this influence has not been addressed in prior studies with a focus on nature-based tourism. Focusing on the Chinese context, our study is the first to investigate whether the two most significant Chinese cultural value orientations of man-nature orientation and relationship orientation moderate the effects of residents' empowerment on their support for sustainable tourism. Our findings partially support the moderating role of both cultural dimensions. Specifically, we found that man-nature orientation moderated the relationships between psychological, social, and environmental empowerment and support for sustainable tourism. This implies that people who think that living in harmony with nature is important are more supportive of sustainable tourism when they are psychologically, socially, or environmentally empowered. However, our findings did not support the moderating effect of man-nature orientation in the relationship between participants' political empowerment and their support for sustainable tourism. This implies that the view that people should live in harmony with nature does not influence residents' political action to support sustainable tourism development. According to Chan and Lau (2000), personal values and beliefs have little influence on Chinese people's political actions, because actions are quite complex in the Chinese political system.

Our results also partially supported the moderating effect of relationship orientation. People with a high (vs. low) relationship orientation usually pay more attention to social relationships in regard to their behavior and decision making (Yang et al., 2007). We found that relationship orientation moderated the links between psychological, social, and political empowerment, and support for sustainable tourism. However, its moderating role in the relationship between environmental empowerment and support for sustainable tourism was not supported. This implies that for people who care about their relationship with others, the effects of sense of psychological, social, and political empowerment on their support for sustainable tourism would be more prominent. This is consistent with previous studies in which the significance of the influence of social-relationship factors on people's environmental attitudes and behavior has been highlighted (Cheung & To, 2019; Sreen et al., 2018). Our results also revealed that the effect of participants' social relationship values on their perception of their ability to control local natural resources and tourism operations was nonsignificant.

Study Limitations and Future Research Directions

Our study has several limitations. First, we used a self-report survey to understand residents' support for sustainable tourism and their intention to stop tourists causing environmental damage. This approach may be subject to social desirability bias. Future studies could focus on the actual behaviors of residents through observation. Second, we viewed relationship orientation simply as the perceived social pressure and tendency to maintain a good relationship with others. However, in Chinese culture, the concept of relationship orientation has more diverse meanings: face, interdependence, and respect for authority are also components (Yau, 1988); thus, future studies could concentrate on these aspects of relationship orientation. Third, we investigated the effects of cultural values from a Chinese perspective, but future cross-cultural studies could be conducted to identify the effects of cultural values in different cultural backgrounds. Fourth, we hired one resident in each community to help collect data, which may have



generated bias, although we tried to avoid this by providing training before the collection of data began.

Conclusion

Our findings indicate how Chinese cultural values affect residents' sense of empowerment and their behavioral intention to actively stop tourists' environmental damaging behavior. We found that in the context of nature-based tourism in China, encouraging in residents the viewpoint of living in harmony with nature and building a good relationship with others are significant factors for the development of sustainable tourism. Our findings show how nature-based tourism planners can promote a form of sustainable tourism development by empowering residents to increase their interaction with tourists. Viewing residents' support for tourism as a key factor for tourism sustainability (Cole, 2006; Scheyvens, 1999), our results show that local government officials and managers of tourism agencies can encourage residents' participation by connecting them with the political, social–physical, and ecological environment. A second insight is that the government officials and staff of tourism agencies should pay attention to local cultural values when developing strategies to encourage resident participation. To achieve good results, it is critical to empower residents to behave in line with their traditional cultural values. For example, for residents who believe in living in harmony with nature, encouraging them to form a closer and more harmonious relationship with their neighbors and their living environment would increase their willingness to participate in sustainable tourism activities. For residents who value social relationships, making them feel they can participate in political and social actions to protect the local environment is critical to achieving good results for sustainable tourism.

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