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## Understanding residents' empowerment and community attachment in festival tourism: The case of Victoria Falls

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of residents' empowerment, community attachment, wellbeing, and economic benefits on their support of festivals. A sample of 510 residents of Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, was used for data collection. The study proposes an empirical model to investigate the impacts of residents' empowerment on their support for festivals and the mediation of the link by community attachment and residents' wellbeing. The results from the structural equation model support all but one hypothesis. Specifically, residents' empowerment fosters wellbeing, community attachment, and support for festivals. Residents' wellbeing mediates these relationships, and economic benefits moderate the mediated model. These findings highlight the importance of psychologically, sociologically, environmentally, and politically empowering the residents in festival host communities. Festival planners, governments, and local authorities are encouraged to communicate the positive effects of the festivals and help to empower the communities to ensure residents' full support. Additionally, they ought to ensure that residents are fully aware of the power they hold and able to use it to their advantage to encourage support for festival development in host communities.

### 1. Introduction

The contributions of resident host communities to mega events and festivals have been found to be important for the development and support of festivals (Papastathopoulos, Ahmad, Al Sabri, & Kaminakis, 2020). To elicit adequate support of the resident of the host communities, Papastathopoulos et al. (2020) argued that destination managers should be conscious of the important role that residents play in the successful planning and execution of festivals and mega events (Papastathopoulos et al., 2020). This raises a question of whether the level of resident involvement requires that they are empowered to take actions corresponding to their belief system or value orientation for the community.

Residents' empowerment occurs at "the top end of the participation ladder where members of a community are active agents of change and they have the ability to find solutions to their problems, make decisions, implement actions and evaluate their solutions" (Cole, 2006, p. 631). This is a key concept in the redistribution of power that makes participation meaningful and enjoyable (Boley & McGehee, 2014). Such

redistribution of power is important in festivals, where success and sustainability are functions of residents' support for and attitudes towards the event (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; Sharpley, 2014).

Residents who feel empowered develop attachment to their community. Community attachment is "the extent and pattern of social participation and integration into the community, and sentiment or affect toward the community" (McCool & Martin, 1994, p. 30). Community attachment, which fosters residents' social, cultural, and environmental support for the festivals (Dychkovskyy & Ivanov, 2020), can be considered a consequence of residents' empowerment. If community attachment is a proximal result of residents' empowerment, then residents who feel attached to their communities are expected to demonstrate more support for festivals.

Following the above reasoning, the current paper proposes an empirical research model in which community attachment and residents' wellbeing mediates the impact of residents' empowerment on festival support. The objectives of the study are to uncover (a) the impact of residents' empowerment on community attachment, residents' wellbeing, and festival support; (b) the effect of community attachment and

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residents' wellbeing on festival support; (c) whether community attachment and residents' wellbeing are mediators of the impact of residents' empowerment on festival support; and (d) whether economic benefits are a moderator of the indirect relationship between residents' empowerment and festival support, via residents' wellbeing (see Fig. 1). As is often the case in social science studies, where human behaviour and actions are investigated, some of the effects and interactions between variables are indirect; hence, mediation analysis is used to identify potential indirect effects. For this study, we employed two mediators (for community attachment and residents' wellbeing) to explain how residents' empowerment leads to support for festival development (Fiedler, Schott, & Meiser, 2011). Data for the study were obtained from residents of Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe.

Wellbeing, which is defined as "a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life" (Diener & Suh, 1997, p. 191), is considered a major determinant of residents' overall quality of life (Yolal, Gursoy, Uysal, Kim, & Karacaoğlu, 2016). This is essential because the residents' level of wellbeing can determine the extent of their acceptance of the festivals, whilst positive perceptions of the economic benefits of the festivals may favourably affect subjective evaluations of wellbeing.

In the context of these discussions, the study sought to address three gaps in the literature, with a research model investigating the impact of residents' empowerment on festival support. First, destination managers and local authorities are continually searching for a balance between destination development and the perceived negative impacts of tourism on the host communities (Luna, 2015). Residents' empowerment can grant the members of the host community the power to be actively involved in the planning and implementation of sustainable policy approaches, which can provide the leverage needed to achieve this balance. In an empowered community, residents are not only planners and stakeholders of festival events but also beneficiaries of the economic, cultural, and environmental dividends of the events. Although residents' empowerment has been linked with several attitudes in tourism studies, Nunkoo, Smith, and Ramkissoon (2013) note the lack of links of the construct to festival tourism, despite the Bido, da Silva, and Ringle (2014) conclusion that understanding of residents' empowerment is a prerequisite for obtaining festival support.

Second, recent studies have investigated the direct effect of community attachment on support for tourism development and residents' environmental attitudes (e.g., Eslami, Khalifah, Mardani, Streimikiene, & Han, 2019; Gannon, Rasoolimanesh, & Taheri, 2021; Olya, 2020; Safshekan, Ozturen, & Ghaedi, 2020). However, few studies have investigated the intervening mechanisms by which residents lend their support to tourism development. The notable exception is Orgaz-Agüera, Castellanos-Verdugo, Acosta Guzmán, Cobeña, and Oviedo-García (2020), who report that community attachment mediates the impact of environmental attitudes on residents' support for sustainable tourism development. Given the dearth of empirical evidence, this paper proposes community attachment and residents' wellbeing as the underlying mechanisms by which residents' empowerment affects their support for festival events.

Third, the dichotomous impacts of festival events are well-documented in literature. For instance, Yolal et al. (2016) conclude that the sociocultural impacts of festivals foster residents' subjective wellbeing. Li and Wan (2015) and Van Winkle and Woosnam (2013) found that festivals are tools for social development of the community. In contrast, community festivals have also been linked to a rise in "tourism phobia" and anti-tourism movements (Seraphin, Gowreesunkar, Zaman, & Bourliataux-Lajoinie, 2019). Although Li and Wan (2017) suggest that the positive benefits of festivals outweigh their detrimental impact, the authors also observe that sympathetic residents tend to perceive more negative impacts than positives. For a developing African nation such as Zimbabwe, the economic development and positive contributions associated with a festival are its goal; thus, stringent policies to mitigate against the negative impacts of the festival are a necessity. For example, tourism organisations and host communities adhere to environmental policies managed by bodies such as the Environmental Management Agency (EMA), whose aim is to ensure the sustainable management of natural resources, protection of the environment, and pollution prevention. Through residents' empowerment, communities can guarantee control over the use of their resources, thereby enhancing festival development without sacrificing the sustainability of the host community.

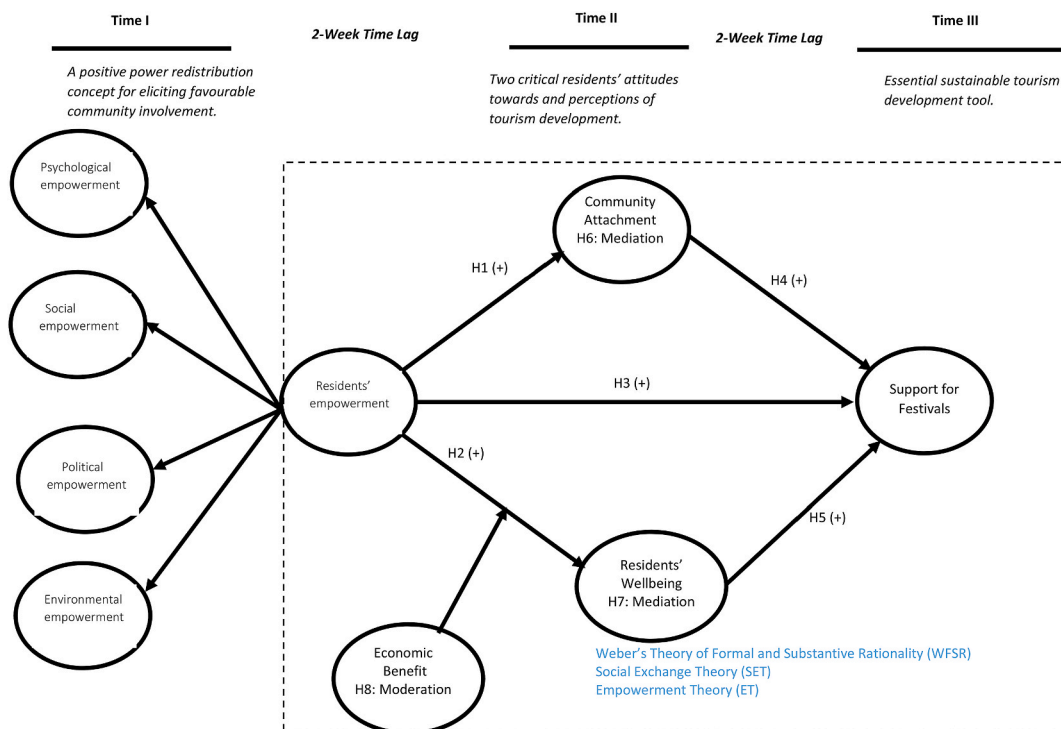


Fig. 1. Proposed empirical model of support for festivals.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Underpinning theory

Three theories are adopted in this paper to explain the hypothesised interrelationships. Empowerment theory (ET) is used to explain the power constructs in this context. According to Rappaport (1981, 1984), empowerment is a construct that connects people's strengths and abilities and proactive behaviours to the social policies and changes in their surrounding environments. Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991) suggests that ET research and interventions connect the wellbeing of individuals with their social and political environments, helping to create a responsive community. Following Zimmerman's observations, it is proposed that when residents are empowered and aware of the power they have over their resources, they become attached to their community and their wellbeing is enhanced. As such, their attitudes towards tourism services may become more positive.

Social exchange theory (SET) has also been widely used in the literature to analyse and interpret residents' attitudes (Gursoy & Kendall, 2006; Latkova and Vogta 2012; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Prayag, Hosany, Nunkoo, & Alders, 2013). SET is adopted in the current work to explain residents' support for festivals (Li and Wan, 2016). SET postulates that social interaction – here interpreted as support for festivals – is an exchange that combines the perceived rewards (empowerment, community attachment, wellbeing) and costs of a relationship (Homans, 1958). In the current study, it is proposed that when residents perceive empowerment as a worthy reward, without any costs involved to them, they are more likely to provide support for the festivals. In support of this notion, Strzelecka and Wicks (2015) suggest that community members should consider the probable benefits and risks of tourism, arguing that positive attitudes towards tourism and support for future developments enable the benefits to supersede the costs. Furthermore, the reverse is also true: namely, if residents perceive the risks to be greater than the rewards, they are more likely to sabotage the tourist activities, thereby reducing support for future development (Ap, 1992).

Though useful, SET has been criticised for its sole focus on analysing residents' attitudes, with some suggesting that it should be aligned with another theory to better explain these attitudes (Látková & Vogt, 2012). Specifically, SET has been criticised for assuming that the relationship between residents and tourists is purely economic and ignoring other potentially underlying factors (Woosnam, Norman, & Ying, 2009). Additionally, McGehee and Andereck (2004) argue that the theory makes two presumably incorrect assumptions: first, people make decisions with the potential for gain in mind, and second, they may think they are making informed decisions at the time, only to realise later that their choices were non-beneficial. Given these noted limitations in literature, this study set out to re-align SET and bring further balance, Weber's formal and substantive rationality (WFSR) theory is proposed (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011).

WFSR theory explains the drive behind people's engagement in various economic activities (Jagd, 2002, pp. 210–238). Weber argues that assessing human reasoning in terms of economic gain alone may be insufficient, as economic activities can be either formal or substantive (McGehee, 2007). In other words, the concept of *economic gain* is too broad, as there are other factors involved that need to be defined if we are to understand people's motives. Weber argues the need to examine the difference between the rationalisation processes across a various culture, having seen that rationality was inherent across cultures: that is the formal rationality and substantive rationality (Kalberg, 1980). WFSR compliments SET theory by explaining the relationships between residents' empowerment, community attachment, wellbeing, and support for festivals.

## 3. Residents' empowerment and community attachment

Festivals create community attachment (Li and Wan, 2015; Yolal et al., 2016), encouraging individuals to develop a sense of belonging within their environments. Social interactions created by tourism events and festivals strengthen social bonds and sense of communality (Goudy, 1990), as well as the community pride and community elements (Baker & Palmer, 2006) that arouse community attachment. Zimmerman and Zahniser (1991), explaining ET, states that empowering residents helps to create a responsive community. When locals are aware of their power in their community and in relation to a festival event, they develop a sense of attachment to their community and become more inclined to support future tourist events and festivals.

Based on the SET and WFSR assessments of the impacts of economic and non-economic benefits on residents' attitudes, it is proposed that when the locals experience empowerment as a festival reward, their feelings of belonging and sense of community attachment are enhanced. WFSR theory states that power, trust, and emotional stability are embedded in political empowerment (the ability to control affairs and gain power), social empowerment (helping people to work together), psychological empowerment (self-esteem and pride), and environmental empowerment (cultural resources, in the case of festival tourism), which all lead to community attachment. When residents are attached to their community, they are more likely to support festivals and tourist activities that take place there; and empowering residents is expected to bring community attachment. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H1.** Residents' empowerment positively affects community attachment.

### 3.1. Residents' empowerment and wellbeing

Writing on ET theory research and application, Zimmerman (1995) concludes that empowerment-oriented interventions enhance wellness, and they create opportunities for people to develop new knowledge. In other words, people's quality of life is enhanced when they are empowered, as they develop new skills and knowledge that can be used for self-improvement and thus for achieving wellbeing. Studies of festivals have shown that such events improve residents' wellbeing and quality of life.

Festivals supply an opportunity for locals to display their cultural heritage, promote the host communities, and attract tourists, and they enhance quality of life (Cudny, Korec, & Rouba, 2012). Festivals generate economic benefits for host communities (e.g., tax revenues, increased employment, local business opportunities and revenue for host destination; Yolal et al., 2016), which also improve wellbeing. Furthermore, the host cities are developed, with new facilities built (infra- and superstructure) that can be used by the locals after the events, thereby improving the lives of local people. Coan et al. (2020) note that putting residents in control and empowering them improves connectedness and wellbeing.

Consistent with other studies on empowerment, Chan and Mak (2020) conclude that empowering people to be civically active not only supports societal functions and improves the community, it also improves psychological and social wellbeing. As such, drawing on ET (Zimmerman, 2000) and WFSR theory, this study suggests that when residents are aware of the power available to them and able to make use of it, they gain new knowledge and skills that promote wellness, alongside a sense of attachment and affection for their own community. Furthermore, SET and WFSR theory indicate that festival tourism empowers residents economically and socio-culturally, which improves their wellbeing (Yolal et al., 2016). On this basis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H2.** Residents' empowerment positively affects their wellbeing.

### 3.2. Residents' empowerment and festival support

From a tourism perspective, empowerment is the residents' ability to assert their rights in relation to tourism development and correct any unbalanced power relations, with the aim of developing their communities (Zuo & Bao, 2008). The core tenet of empowerment stresses giving full personal rights to residents to maintain the balance of power relations and ensure the communities' enthusiasm for tourism development (Yang et al., 2020). Whilst there is debate in the literature about whether empowerment is multidimensional (Boley & McGehee, 2014) or unidimensional (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012), there is strong evidence that dimensions of empowerment do exist, with observations of psychological, political, sociological, and environmental elements.

As shown by the theoretical concept of SET, once residents perceive the benefits of psychological, social, political, and environmental empowerment, they are more likely to give their support for future events. Furthermore, as shown by WFSR theory, the psychological, social, political, and environmental elements of empowerment are non-economic benefits that the community can relate to. Once these benefits have been realised in the long-term, residents are more likely to take action by taking precautionary measurements to protect their resource, especially when there is recognition that engagement in festival tourism brings power, self-esteem, the ability to protect one's culture, and economic benefits. Additionally, it has been noted that empowered residents engage more with their communities' development (Yang et al., 2020). Thus, support for future festivals is likely to be a result of empowering local people.

In view of the arguments presented above on its dimensions, residents' empowerment is likely to be a strong predictor of their support for tourism development (Strzelecka & Wicks, 2015). Bearing this in mind, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H3.** Residents' empowerment positively affects festival support.

### 3.3. Community attachment and festival support

Festivals foster community attachment and other benefits, such as a sense of community among residents (Yolal et al., 2016). The concept of community attachment, borrowed from the sociology literature, is concerned with one's level of attachment to one's own community (McCool & Martin, 1994), and it has been brought into tourism research to help examine residents' attitudes towards tourism development (Williams, McDonald, Riden, & Uysal, 1995). Some have argued that overly attached community members tend to have negative attitudes towards deleterious impact of tourism but ultimately supports its development (Sheldon & Var, 1984). In other words, when locals have a sense of attachment to their community, support for future developments is more probable. Additionally, congruent with WFSR theory perception of substantive rationality, residents' community involvement – as well as their cultural and environmental attitudes and their sense of community attachment – are all antecedents of support for tourism. Furthermore, in WFSR theory, formal rationality promotes the economic benefits of tourism, thus residents' sense of attachment to their community predicts their support for festival tourism. Applying theory to the hypothesised constructs, one concludes that when residents are content with their surroundings and feel a sense of wellbeing associated with the festivals, they provide their support for future festivals. Thus, the following hypothesis is presented:

**H4.** Community attachment has a positive effect on festival support.

### 3.4. Residents' wellbeing and festival support

Residents' wellbeing is an indicator of how residents perceive their lives (Teng & Chang, 2020). The literature suggests that subjective wellbeing closely and strongly correlates with development (Ivlevs, 2017; Jordan et al., 2015; Liang & Hui, 2016) and that residents'

wellbeing is a driver of tourism development (Woo, Kim, & Uysal, 2015). According to Baker and Palmer (2006), quality of life is widely discussed in relation to medical interventions, health management, housing programmes, and economic and community development. More so, the desire to enhance people's lives has become a key aim of many governments and public authorities (Dolan & Metcalfe, 2012). Festivals are among the strategies that have been adopted to promote tourist destinations and, in the process, help improve economies and quality of life amongst the people in the host community. Gotham (2005) and Huang, Li, and Cai (2010) agree that festivals improve local economies by providing jobs and business opportunities for locals. Furthermore, festival attributes – such as opportunities for social interaction during the events – contribute to residents' wellbeing.

Similarly, the literature shows that the success of these events is dependent on the enthusiasm and support of local residents (Gursoy, Kim, & Uysal, 2004; Sharma, Dyer, Carter, & Gursoy, 2008). In addition, residents tend to support the development and hosting of those events that they perceive to have benefits for their community or which may improve their wellbeing (Teng & Chang, 2020). The literature details many factors that can affect residents' wellbeing. Previous studies have shown that festivals and events that can increase opportunities for social interaction are amongst the antecedents of residents' wellbeing (Newman, Tay, & Diener, 2014; Torres, 2015). In view of the empirical findings and theoretical frameworks presented, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H5.** Residents' wellbeing is a significant driver of festival support.

## 4. Mediating role of residents' wellbeing and community attachment

The study's conceptual model proposes a positive parallel mediation between community attachment and wellbeing and between residents' empowerment and their support for festivals. ET explains the formation of power available in social gatherings and their likely effect on residents (wellbeing, community attachment, and festival support), and SET and WFSR theory are employed to assess the impact of empowerment on levels of festival support. As illustrated in the literature and argued in the current discussion, SET – although skewed towards economic gains – is strengthened by WFSR theory, which assesses effects from both formal and substantive rationality perspectives. It is thus proposed that when residents perceive themselves to be empowered (psychologically, sociologically, politically, environmentally, and economically), they obtain social benefits (e.g., their wellbeing is enhanced and community attachment is developed), and as a result, their desire to support festivals and events is increased. People can be empowered without knowing the power they have in a situation (as it is alleged in the psychological empowerment). It is further believed that when residents are aware of the power available to them, they become more engaged in festival development and use their knowledge and power to improve their lives. As such, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H6.** Wellbeing mediates the relationship between residents' empowerment and their festival support.

**H7.** Community attachment mediates the relationship between residents' empowerment and their festival support.

## 5. Moderating role of economic benefits

One of the main benefits of festival tourism is improvement in the financial capacity of the community's residents. Festival tourism leads to the commodification of the host nation's culture, promoting the creation and improvement of locally made products and services, capacity development, and pre-festival training that has financial benefits for both existing and new businesses (increasing circulation of resources through spending by tourists and locals; Báez-Montenegro & Devesa,

2020). Revenue is generated at the local and national levels (Doe, Preko, Akroful, & Okai-Anderson, 2021). These economic benefits of festival tourism have been observed in African countries, and a study conducted by Pretorius, Viviers, and Botha (2016) in South Africa found that festivals contribute to the economic development of participants – particularly artists – through gate fees and the sale of products. Similarly, Agbabiaka, Omoike, and Omisore (2017) show that tourism helps locals as well as local governments through tax revenues.

Whilst some studies have shown that the economic impact of a festival depends heavily on its duration – and whether visitors seek overnight experiences in the host community (Meunier & Marstiller, 2018) – there is no doubt that festivals aid their host communities through economic development. Furthermore, Meunier and Marstiller (2018) conclude that the economic development promoted by festivals produces extra money that enables local people to pursue their endeavours there, by influencing wellbeing and engagement. Based on this finding – and the tenets of social exchange and WSFR theory – it is proposed that the economic benefits of festivals positively affect wellbeing. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented:

**H8.** Economic benefits significantly moderate the relationship between residents' empowerment and wellbeing, such that the relationship is stronger when there are greater economic benefits.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1. Participants and procedure

The data for this research were gathered from residents of the resort town of Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. In addition to being home to one of the world's largest waterfalls, Victoria Falls is also famous for hosting the annual "Jameson Festival", which serves as a major attraction for tourists. The festival is a 3-day event, hosted from 29 to 31 December. Together with the waterfall, the festival is at the forefront of tourism's contributions to the nation's economic growth. Despite the festival's contribution to Zimbabwean and African tourism in general, perceptions of residents of Victoria Falls regarding tourism development have rarely appeared in the international tourism literature.

*The survey in the current study was conducted in a census-like manner, with residents visited in their homes and invited to participate.* As recommended in previous studies, eligibility for participation was dependent on the individual's (a) residency status, (b) age, and (c) previous attendance at the festival (Li and Wan, 2016; Yolal et al., 2016). Individuals who satisfied all three eligibility conditions were recruited for the three-wave survey in the study. A *three-wave time-lag design* was chosen for two reasons. First, the study was designed to draw inferences about a causal relationship between residents' empowerment and their support for festival, and a time-lagged design minimises the risk of method bias due to social desirability. This approach has been used in previous studies, such as those of Karatepe, Yavas, Babakus, and Deitz (2018) and Kotoua and Ilkan (2017). Second, a time-lag minimises the potential influence of common method variance. This choice was based on the widely accepted recommendations of Podsakoff et al. (2003). Several previous tourism and hospitality studies have also adopted the method.

Working in conjunction with the local authority, the researcher administered the surveys to residents before, during, and after the festival, with 2-week gaps between the waves. *The decision to leave 2 weeks between surveys was motivated by the findings of previous studies.* For instance, Karatepe and Shahriari (2014) applied a 2-week time lag in their investigation of hospitality employees' turnover intention and perceptions of organisational justice. Similarly, in their review of studies on high-performance work practices, Kloutsiniotis and Mihail (2020) note the importance of time-lagged design and reveal that, of the eight studies that used the approach, four used a 2-week lag. Thus, we determined that a 2-week lag would be appropriate for this investigation. However, a major drawback of the time-lag design is the difficulty of ensuring the same number of responses

are received at the end and at the beginning. However, in our case, this difficulty did not arise and we had sufficient cases to support an adequate investigation.

The respondents' participation was on a voluntary basis, and the respondents were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Each questionnaire set included messages reassuring respondents of the study's confidentiality, purpose, and anonymity. This was done as a procedural remedy to reduce the impact of method bias on the findings (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012).

In the first wave, before the festival, a total of 600 questionnaires (the Time I survey) were administered. Of these, 580 were completed and returned. All 580 respondents to Time I were then sent Time II surveys. Just 550 Time II questionnaires were completed and returned. These 550 individuals were then sent the Time III surveys. Of these, 510 were completed and returned. The final response rate was thus 78.5% (510/650). Several reasons can be given for the high response rate in this study. These include the following:

- One of the researchers is an indigene of Victoria Falls and was actively involved in the data collection process throughout. As the study itself proposes, being part of a community gives privileged access and the ability to communicate in ways that are more easily understood by other members.
- Local authorities were also involved in the coordination of the data collection; thus, respect for the unity of the community may also have played a role.
- Before the data collection began, a pilot study was conducted to ensure the wording of the surveys was clear and straightforward. This made it easier for people to participate and respond appropriately.
- Response-rate-enhancing techniques were applied, such as reassuring participants of their confidentiality and anonymity, using sealed envelopes, and reminding participants of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

### 6.2. Measures

Prior to the administration of the survey, a pilot study was conducted with 20 residents. The participants in the pilot reported no problems with the readability of the survey. The results also confirmed that the items in the survey were understandable and measured the intended constructs. The questionnaire was thus not amended.

A multi-dimensional scale was used to measure residents' empowerment. The scale's dimensions were psychological, sociological, political, and environmental. Five items were used to gauge residents' psychological empowerment, with three for sociological empowerment and four for political and environmental empowerment. The scale was adapted from those of Boley and McGehee (2014) and Chinyele and Lwoga (2019). Responses were rated from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

Community attachment was operationalised using four items from Lee (2013). This scale was scored from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Residents' wellbeing was measured using three items from Yolal et al. (2016). Ratings on the wellbeing scale ran from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). Support for the festival was operationalised using an adaptation of the McGehee and Andereck (2004) three-item scale for support for tourism development. The items were rated on a scale from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Economic benefit was measured using four items adapted from the Perdue, Long, and Allen (1990) scale of personal benefits from tourism. The ratings ran from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree"). The difference is anchor for construct; that is, the use of 1-5 for some constructs and 1-7 for others is amongst the procedural remedies intended to prevent common method variance, as suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003).

6.3. Data analysis

In this study, partial-least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to estimate the hypothesised relationships. Path analysis using PLS-SEM is widely accepted in the tourism and hospitality literature due to its significant advantages over co-variance structural equation modelling (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). For instance, PLS-SEM is known to better estimate complex models in which several construct account for one another, as well as explorative and predictive studies and those with small sample sizes (Chen, Zhou, Zhan, & Zhou, 2020; Rather, 2021). All latent variables were measured as reflective constructs. The PLS algorithm with bias-corrected and complete bootstrapping techniques with 10,000 subsamples and 510 cases was used to estimate the significance of the hypothesised relationships (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011), with the SmartPLS version 3.3.2 software (Ringle, Da Silva, & Bido, 2015).

7. Results

The results of the data analysis are reported in this section. First, the output from SPSS regarding the demographic profile of the participants is reported, followed by the measurement model findings and the structural model results.

7.1. Demographic profile of the participants

The participants had all been living in Victoria Falls for at least one year prior to the commencement of the study, and the largest group had been there for more than 20 years (143: 28.0%). Most were male (307: 60.2%) and either single or divorced (387: 64.1%). The group had a diverse educational background, with 58.40% (298) holding a standard university degree, 23.5% (120) a vocational qualification, and 12.2% (62) a master's or PhD, whilst 5.9% (30) had reached the primary or secondary educational level. Details of the respondents' demographic profiles are given in Table 1.

7.2. Measurement model assessment

The inter-item reliability of the study was identified by evaluating the standardised factor loadings for all indicators. The results (see Table 2) show that all indicators are loaded adequately to their

Table 1  
Respondents' profiles.

Category	#	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	307	60.2
Female	203	39.8
<i>Age</i>		
18–27 years	67	13.1
28–37 years	208	40.8
38–47 years	132	25.9
48–57 years	79	15.5
57 and over	24	4.7
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single or divorced	387	64.1
Married	183	35.9
<i>Education</i>		
Primary	2	0.4
Secondary	28	5.5
Vocational	120	23.5
University	298	58.4
Master/PhD	62	12.2
<i>Residency</i>		
1–5 years	48	9.4
6–10 years	81	15.9
11–15 years	133	26.1
16–20 years	105	20.6
More than 20 years	143	28.0

underlining variables. The loadings were all above the required critical level of 0.7, as recommended by Hair et al. (2016). We followed the approach proposed in the extant literature to evaluate the convergent validity of the study. Specifically, the study relied on the Bagozzi, Yi, and Philip (1991) requirement that average variance extracted (AVE) be greater than 0.5 for a valid convergence of variables. The value of AVE for the current study ranged from 0.631 to 0.888, thus convergent validity was confirmed (Lasisi, Ozturen, Eluwole, & Avci, 2020). Third, the internal consistency of the constructs was identified using composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, and the Dijkstra and Henseler (2015) rho\_A coefficient. All the measuring indicators of internal consistency should be equal to or greater than 0.7. As shown in Table 2, all the constructs in the study had an accepted level of internal consistency.

7.2.1. Discriminant validity

To find the discriminant validity, the study employed the well-accepted Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria and the Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio. Both methods stipulate the conditions for confirming whether there are discriminant validity concerns. For instance, according to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the value of the square root of AVE should be greater than the inter-construct correlations, whilst for HTMT, the ratio should be less than or equal to 0.85 (Kline, 2005; Ogunmokun, Eluwole, Avci, Lasisi, & Ikhiede, 2020). The results show that the study met both sets of criteria; hence, discriminant validity was not a problem (see Table 3).

7.3. Results of hypotheses testing

The extant literature suggests that, after the measurement model's validity and reliability have been assured, the next step is to estimate the level of significance of the path coefficients (Ogunmokun et al., 2020; Umrani et al., 2020). The results in relation to the hypotheses are summarised in Table 3. Hypothesis 1 posits that residents' empowerment is positively correlated with community attachment. The results fully support this hypothesis ( $\beta = 0.254, t = 2.287, p \leq 0.022$ ). Hypothesis 2 states that residents' empowerment positively correlates with residents' wellbeing. The results also support this hypothesis ( $\beta = 0.436, t = 6.984, p \leq 0.000$ ). Hypothesis 3 states that residents' empowerment positively affects their festival support. This hypothesis also receives empirical support ( $\beta = 0.183, t = 2.346, p \leq 0.019$ ). Fig. 2 shows that the path coefficient from community attachment to festival support is positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.354, t = 5.205, p \leq 0.000$ ) and that of resident wellbeing to festival support is also positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.177, t = 3.417, p \leq 0.001$ ). Thus, hypotheses 4 and 5 are supported (see Fig. 2).

The findings (see Table 3) highlight the mediating effect of community attachment and residents' wellbeing. Ten thousand sub-sample sizes were used to perform the bias-corrected and accelerated bootstrapped analysis to investigate the significance of the indirect paths. For an indirect path to be significant, the values of the confidence interval (CI) should not include zeros (Hayes, 2013). Hypothesis 6 proposes that community attachment mediates the relationship between residents' empowerment and their festival support; but the results include zero (indirect effect = 0.090, LLCI = -0.012, and ULCI = 0.216,  $p < 0.096$ ). Thus, community attachment does not mediate the relationship as proposed, and hypothesis 6 is rejected. In contrast, hypothesis 7, which argues that residents' wellbeing mediates the relationship between residents' empowerment and their festival support, is supported, as the results do not include zero (indirect effect = 0.077, LLCI = 0.036, and ULCI = 0.133,  $p < 0.002$ ). Thus, residents' wellbeing is found to mediate this relationship (see Table 4).

The final hypothesis posits that economic benefits to residents moderate the indirect path from empowerment to festival support, through wellbeing. That is, the relationship between residents' empowerment and festival support is stronger when there are clear economic benefits. To test this moderating effect, we used a two-stage

**Table 2**  
Measurement model.

Factors	Items	Loadings	AVE	CR	Alpha	rho_A
<b>Psychological Empowerment (PysEmp)</b>	EMPPS1	0.938	0.869	0.964	0.950	0.951
	EMPPS2	0.932				
	EMPPS3	0.944				
	EMPPS4	0.915				
<b>Sociological Empowerment (SocEmp)</b>	EMPPS1	0.786	0.789	0.937	0.909	0.910
	EMPPS2	0.938				
	EMPPS3	0.935				
	EMPPS4	0.886				
<b>Political Empowerment (PolEmp)</b>	EMPPS1	0.884	0.822	0.949	0.928	0.934
	EMPPS2	0.940				
	EMPPS3	0.914				
	EMPPS4	0.888				
<b>Environmental Empowerment (EnvEmp)</b>	EMPPS1	0.786	0.631	0.872	0.804	0.822
	EMPPS2	0.879				
	EMPPS3	0.786				
	EMPPS4	0.718				
<b>Economic Benefits (ECB)</b>	ECONBEN1	0.792	0.704	0.905	0.867	0.941
	ECONBEN2	0.824				
	ECONBEN3	0.888				
	ECONBEN4	0.848				
<b>Residents Wellbeing (ResWbg)</b>	RESWB1	0.805	0.775	0.912	0.853	0.853
	RESWB2	0.937				
	RESWB3	0.895				
<b>Community Attachment (CommAtt)</b>	COMMATT1	0.941	0.888	0.960	0.938	0.958
	COMMATT2	0.937				
	COMMATT3	0.949				
<b>Festival Support (FestSpt)</b>	RESSUP1	0.892	0.821	0.932	0.891	0.896
	RESSUP2	0.915				
	RESSUP3	0.910				

Note: AVE is “average variance extracted”; α is Cronbach’s alpha; CR is “composite reliability”; critical threshold values for AVE = 0.50; composite reliability = 0.70; and α = 0.70.

**Table 3**  
Criteria for discriminant validity.

	CommAtt	ECB	EnvEmp	FestSpt	PolEmp	PysEmp	ResEmp	ResWbg	SocEmp
<i>Fornell and Larcker Criteria</i>									
CommAtt	<b>0.942</b>								
ECB		<b>0.839</b>							
EnvEmp	0.083	0.303	<b>0.794</b>						
FestSpt	0.442	0.239	0.052	<b>0.906</b>					
PolEmp	0.023	0.159	0.436	-0.025	<b>0.907</b>				
PysEmp	0.234	0.291	0.188	0.322	0.14	<b>0.932</b>			
ResEmp	0.243	0.388	0.443	0.323	0.464	0.843	<b>0.592</b>		
ResWbg	0.237	0.278	0.052	0.34	-0.044	0.409	0.4	<b>0.881</b>	
SocEmp	0.215	0.298	0.082	0.331	0.132	0.546	0.787	0.409	<b>0.888</b>
<i>Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio</i>									
CommAtt									
ECB									
EnvEmp	0.105	0.384							
FestSpt	0.473	0.263	0.106						
PolEmp	0.054	0.187	0.496	0.077					
PysEmp	0.245	0.304	0.208	0.35	0.149				
ResEmp	0.246	0.455	0.737	0.353	0.708	0.79			
ResWbg	0.262	0.279	0.168	0.388	0.063	0.455	0.448		
SocEmp	0.228	0.335	0.124	0.368	0.141	0.583	0.764	0.464	

Note: The square root of AVE is presented in bolded font on the diagonal and the correlations between variables are given off the diagonal. The shade boxes are standard approach for reporting the heterotrait-monotrait ratio.

method of calculating the moderating term (Helm, Eggert, & Garnefeld, 2010). The estimation returned a significant result (interaction effect = -0.01, t = 1.818, p ≤ 0.035). Therefore, the interaction term of

residents’ empowerment x economic benefits is significant, and hypothesis 8 is supported.

This study used the R<sup>2</sup> value of “full model” versus “model without

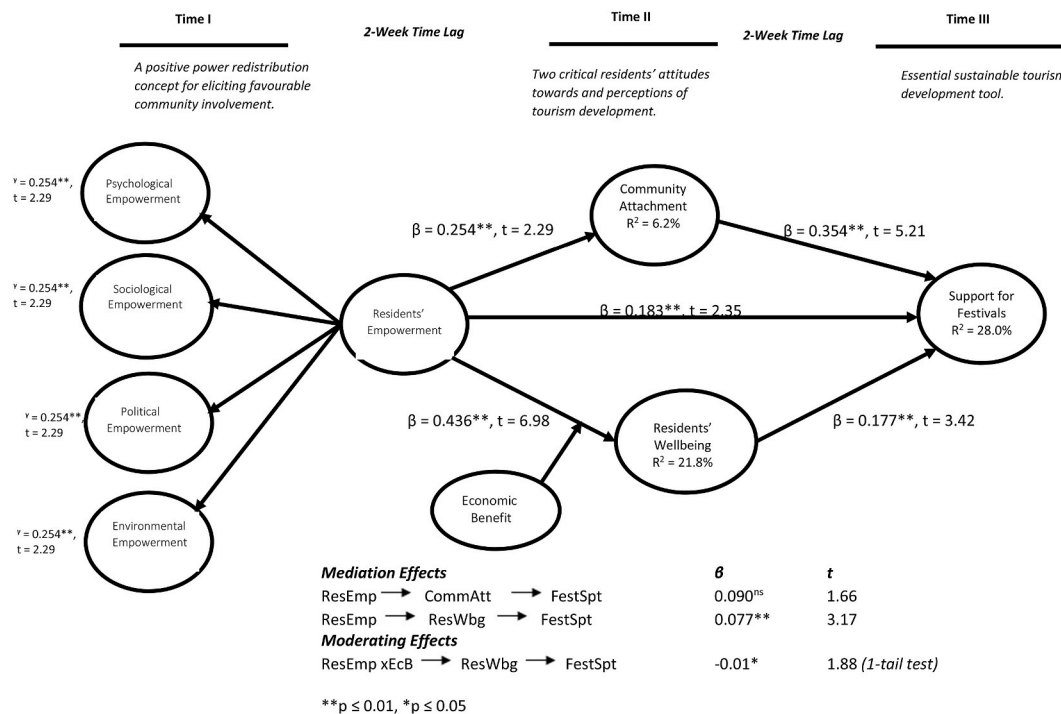


Fig. 2. Structural model with results.

Table 4  
Path coefficients and significance.

Hypothesis	Relationships	Beta	SE	t-values	p-values	CI		Decision
						2.5%	97.5%	
1	ResEmp→CommAtt	0.254	0.111	2.287	0.022	0.054	0.477	Supported
2	ResEmp→ResWbg	0.436	0.062	6.984	0.000	0.311	0.553	Supported
3	ResEmp→FestSpt	0.183	0.078	2.346	0.019	0.033	0.331	Supported
4	CommAtt→FestSpt	0.354	0.068	5.205	0.000	0.225	0.492	Supported
5	ResWbg→FestSpt	0.177	0.052	3.417	0.001	0.083	0.286	Supported
6	ResEmp→CommAtt→FestSpt	0.090	0.054	1.663	0.096	-0.012	0.216	Rejected
7	ResEmp→ResWbg→FestSpt	0.077	0.024	3.165	0.002	0.036	0.133	Supported
8	ResEmp x EcB→ResWbg→FestSpt	-0.01	0.005	1.818*	0.035	-0.02	-0.003	Supported

Note: ResEmp = Resident empowerment, CommAtt = Community attachment, ResWbg = Resident's wellbeing, FestSpt = festival Support, EcB = Economic benefit.

moderator” to estimate the strength of the moderation terms, using the Cohen (1988) effect size formula below:

$$f^2 = \frac{R^2 \text{ of Fully Moderated Model} - R^2 \text{ of Model minus moderator}}{1 - R^2 \text{ of fully moderated model}}$$

As reported in Table 5, the effect sizes of 0.04 and 0.05 for residents' wellbeing and festival support, respectively, represent a weak effect, according to the Cohen convention for determining the strength of effects. The convention sets 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 as the critical thresholds for weak, moderate, and strong effects, respectively (Wilden, Gudergan, Nielsen, and Lings, 2013). Whilst the results indicate a weak effect, this does not nullify the significance of the interaction, as scholars have argued that weak effects are not synonymous with insignificant effects (Umrani et al., 2020).

Table 6 reports the results for the predictive relevance of the model.

Table 5  
Strength of moderating effect.

Variable	R <sup>2</sup>		F <sup>2</sup>	Effect Size
	Included	Excluded		
ResWbg	0.218	0.189	0.04	Weak
FestSpt	0.280	0.276	0.05	Weak

In the hospitality literature, scholars recommend the use of PLS-Predict as a robust test of the ability of a proposed model to predict outcomes (Shmueli et al., 2016; 2019). In view of this recommendation, this study includes a construct-level PLS-Predict analysis with a 10-fold procedure (Shmueli et al., 2019). In this procedure, a model with strong predictive relevance will have Q2 values greater than zero and the item-level error of the partial-least squares (PLS) model will be lower than that of the LM model. Since the Q2 value of the latent variable “festival support” is 0.113 – which is greater than 0 – and the indicators error in the LM model is greater than in PLS model, it is concluded that the model has strong predictive relevance.

### 8. Discussion

The model in the present study enhances understanding of residents' empowerment in the tourism and destination literature. Precisely, this study investigated the influences of ResEmp on resident's support for festivals. The indirect effect of community attachment and resident's wellbeing in the aforementioned relationship was also examined. The hypotheses for the study were underpinned by ET, SET, and WFSR theory. Data from residents of Victoria Falls were used to measure the associations of interest. All but one of the hypothesised relationships – namely, the mediating role of community attachment in the link



**Table 6**  
PLS Predict<sub>y</sub>.

	PLS		LM		PLS-LM		Q <sup>2</sup> _Predict
	RMSE	MAE	RMSE	MAE	RMSE	MAE	
RESSUP4	0.593	0.507	0.850	0.545	-0.257	-0.038	0.110
RESSUP5	0.672	0.526	2.031	0.640	-1.359	-0.114	0.082
RESSUP6	0.709	0.532	2.257	0.680	-1.548	-0.148	0.087

between residents' empowerment and festival support – were supported. These findings lead to several observations.

First, adopting ET (Rappaport 1981, 1984), this study argues that residents' empowerment leads to community attachment, and the results suggest that the former has a strong positive effect on the latter. In other words, the feeling of being in control of the social, political, psychological, and environmental impacts of tourism development – in the form of festivals and mega events – enhances residents' affections for and affinity with their community. This finding supports the extant literature. For instance, our discovery mirrors that of Purnomo, Rahayu, Riani, Suminah, and Udin (2020), who argue that empowerment drives support for tourism and tourism competitiveness via community support. The failure of destination managers to engage residents through effective empowerment programmes risks triggering residents' rejection of tourism development. Under this condition, residents may engage in sabotage to protect their community from the detrimental impacts of festivals and mega events.

Second, the findings highlight the impact of residents' empowerment on wellbeing and festival support. As residents begin to feel empowered in process of event planning, event managers and destination managers should emphasise the expected benefits and potential drawbacks that the event may have for the community. In this way, residents are better equipped to evaluate the festival's impacts and manage their expectations. Based on WFSR theory, these sort of relationships between residents and event planners tend to afford substantial grounds for rationally considering the offerings of festival development and, in turn, support for tourism. This finding aligns with those of Wang, Wang, Cao, Jia, and Wu (2018), who found significant positive links between quality of life and support for development amongst Chinese residents.

Third, in line with recent findings from other studies (Teng & Chang, 2020), the results here show that residents' wellbeing is a practical mediator of the influence of residents' empowerment on festival support. That is, effective support for festival events cannot be elicited from residents through empowerment alone; this is better actualised when residents perceive a connection between their wellbeing and the degree of empowerment afforded to them. This outcome is crucial because resident wellbeing has the capacity to motivate residents to go beyond what is demanded of them (Deptola, 2021). In contrast, a lack of wellbeing drains motivation and can be costly for destination management, reducing support for festival development. Finally, the study findings reveal that economic benefits significantly increase wellbeing. In other words, the more aware that residents are of the power discourse before them, the more their wellbeing improves.

## 9. Conclusions

This study examined the effects of residents' empowerment on festival support, via the mediating effects of community attachment and residents' wellbeing and the moderating effect of economic benefits. A convenience sampling strategy was used to gather data from residents of the host community, Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. The study concludes that residents' empowerment is a significant driver of festival support, via the mediating effects of community attachment and residents' wellbeing. It also shows that awareness of economic benefits strengthens these relationships. The results of the study thus affirm that residents' empowerment fosters festival support. Whilst there is a positive relationship between empowerment and community attachment, this does

not mediate the relationship between empowerment and festival support.

### 9.1. Theoretical implications

This paper demonstrates that residents' empowerment positively affects their festival support. In addition, it is strongly correlated with residents' wellbeing and community attachment. Thus, awareness of one's psychological, political, sociological, and environmental power significantly improves wellbeing and community attachment in festival host communities. Whilst ET has been widely used in education, sociology, and anthropology studies, its application in tourism research remains in its infancy (Yang et al., 2020). By adopting ET, this paper extends its application into the tourism and destination research domain. Additionally, this study employed WFSR theory to compliment SET in explaining non-economic benefits and their effects on residents' support. The study found that economic benefits effectively moderate the relationship between residents' empowerment and wellbeing, thus enhancing their support for the festival and future developments. Finally, having identified residents' wellbeing as a mediating variable, we are able to clarify the role of residents' empowerment in enhancing their support for the festival and future festival developments. These observations have further supported the empowerment mechanisms and the mechanisms that mediate residents' empowerment and festival support.

### 9.2. Managerial implications

With their focus on residents as important tourism stakeholders, these findings highlight the need for planners, destination managers, and local authorities to encourage the ambassadorial spirit of the host community. This would stimulate support for the planning and the execution of successful and sustainable festival events that deliver on the promise of economic returns for the host community. Specifically, the findings of the current study could be applied during event planning, implementation, and assessment. The study shows conclusively that residents' empowerment effectively promotes festival support in host communities. The literature shows that residents play a crucial role in the success of festivals, making them a vital resource in festival implementation. The concept of empowerment emphasises the rights and decision-making powers of residents in relation to tourism development (Yang et al., 2020). It has been shown that when residents share feelings of psychological, sociological, political, and environmental power, they are more likely to express support for festivals and festival development. As such, festival planners and authorities are encouraged to transfer power to the host communities, as this ultimately promotes continued support for festivals and festival development.

Furthermore, as residents' empowerment has a considerable positive influence on community attachment and wellbeing, festival planners should take the following steps to ensure festival support and future development:

- As suggested by Yang et al. (2020), amongst others, festival planners are encouraged to promote the formation of active social groups involved in the planning of the festivals, with members drawn from host communities. Planners and organisers are encouraged to devise strategies to educate these groups, thereby empowering them to take

control of the resources and employ them to their own advantage. Yang et al. (2020) suggests the improvement of stable strategies to take part in tourism decision-making for residents, to guard the residents' rights and ensure their awareness of their rights, thus allowing the host communities engage with their roles in tourism development.

- In this regard, festival planners and organisers should ensure that host community representatives are given the status and space to present their views regarding festival development, prior to implementation. Planners and organisers should protect residents' right to express their concerns and make demands. It is also imperative that residents are informed in a timely manner of any new projects and changes in developments. In this way, social cohesion is fostered and residents are able to actively participate in festival developments projects, thus eliciting their support for future development and ongoing festival support.
- The results show that residents' empowerment is positively correlated with wellbeing; and as such, festival planners ought to ensure that residents are fully aware of the power they hold and are able to use this to their advantage.

### 9.3. Limitations and scope for future study

In addition to making the contributions detailed above, this study has a number of limitations. First, the scope of the study was limited to a single festival in a developing country in southern Africa. This contextual limitation of the sample population should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings. Future research contributions could be made by validating these findings in other developing nations that host festivals, as well as making comparisons with developed countries outside of Africa. Second, the current study tested a parallel moderated-mediated model by linking residents' empowerment and festival support through the mediation of community attachment and residents' well-being, moderated by economic benefit. This empirical model could be enhanced by testing other theoretical mediators, such as social cohesion, emotional solidarity, and quality of life, and moderators such as other non-economic tourism benefits.

### Author statement

Kayode Kolawole Eluwole was involved in the conceptualization, data curation and analysis for the project. Cathrine Banga was involved in the conceptualization of the study and the actual data collection process. Taiwo Temitope Lasisi was involved in the original drafting of the manuscript, the final draft and the conceptualization of the study. Ali Ozturen was involved in the review and editing process as well as the finalization of the concepts. Hasan Kilic was involved in the supervision of the project

### Declaration of competing interest

None.

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