



The Impact of Tourism Destination Social Responsibility on Citizens' Quality of Life; The Study of the Role of Perceived Economic, Cultural and Environmental Effects (Case Study of Citizens of Mashhad)

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Abstract

Destination social responsibility (DSR), by creating job opportunities, improving infrastructure, and preserving the environment, contributes to enhancing economic well-being and public health. This approach fosters greater social participation, a sense of belonging, and citizens' satisfaction with their living environment. Furthermore, by strengthening local culture and identity, DSR sustainably improves residents' quality of life. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of destination social responsibility on citizens' quality of life through the mediating role of perceived economic, cultural, and environmental impacts. The statistical population consists of residents of Mashhad, from which a sample of 384 individuals was selected using convenience sampling based on the recommended sample size for infinite populations. The data collection tool was the standard questionnaire developed by Alavi Al-Sakkaf (2022). To assess validity, content validity confirmed by experts was used, along with construct validity (convergent and discriminant). Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, both exceeding the threshold of 0.70. Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling via SmartPLS 3 software. The results showed that destination social responsibility has a significant effect on perceived economic, cultural, and environmental impacts. Moreover, the impact of DSR on citizens' quality of life through these mediating variables was also found to be significant.

Keywords: Cultural Effects- Economic Effects- Perceived Environmental Empacts- Quality of Life of Citizens- Social Responsibility of Tourism Destination.

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Introduction

Support for tourism development is a modern concept recognized as one of the emerging trends in tourism literature and continues to be explored in research across various regions of the world (Alavi Al-Sakkaf et al., 2022). Tourism is among the fastest-growing industries worldwide, ranking just behind the chemical and fuel industries. Many countries, especially developing ones, consider tourism a tool for promoting economic and social development and contributing to global GDP (Gouffi et al., 2019). Tourism also represents a global movement that effectively reflects the integration of economic, social, and cultural affairs. Besides its economic and employment benefits, tourism generates significant social and cultural impacts. It involves places and spaces embedded in the cultures, economies, and social lives of host communities. Economically, tourism contributes to income generation and job creation for local residents by utilizing local spaces for tourists. Social impacts refer to changes in the daily lives of host communities resulting from interactions with tourists. Culturally, tourism can affect local lifestyles, architectural styles, art, and traditions. The environmental impacts of tourism development are systemic, influencing spatial, physical, social, economic, and managerial dimensions. These effects are particularly evident in destination areas, where tourists interact with the environment, economy, culture, and local communities. Therefore, the impacts of tourism are generally considered under three categories: socio-cultural, economic, and environmental (Shokoohi et al., 2014). The present study aims to investigate the impact of destination social responsibility and the perceived economic, cultural, and environmental effects on the quality of life of citizens in Mashhad, a prominent tourism destination in Iran. The research hypotheses are as follows:

1. Destination social responsibility significantly affects the quality of life of Mashhad citizens.
2. Perceived economic impacts significantly affect the quality of life of Mashhad citizens.
3. Perceived cultural impacts significantly affect the quality of life of Mashhad citizens.
4. Perceived environmental impacts significantly affect the quality of life of Mashhad citizens.
5. Perceived economic impacts mediate the relationship between destination social responsibility and the quality of life of Mashhad citizens.
6. Perceived cultural impacts mediate the relationship between destination social responsibility and the quality of life of Mashhad citizens.
7. Perceived environmental impacts mediate the relationship between destination social responsibility and the quality of life of Mashhad citizens.

Ardalan et al. (2022) showed that social responsibility has a significant direct effect on organizational commitment. Therefore, social responsibility is a key factor organisations must consider to foster employee commitment. Establishing communication networks and channels that promote employee responsibility can enhance organizational commitment. Razmi (2021) found a correlation between dimensions of social responsibility (effective communication, fair wages, and understanding of the work environment) and organizational citizenship behavior. Among these, effective communication had the strongest predictive value, followed by understanding wage fairness and then the work environment. Ghanbari et al. (2019) demonstrated a positive relationship between tourism impacts and specific life domains. A positive perception of economic, social, cultural, and environmental effects among citizens leads to increased satisfaction with material well-being, local community, emotional well-being, health, and safety, thus enhancing overall quality of life. Gholipour Soleimani and Goli (2018) found that various dimensions of the tourism industry influence the quality of life in Gilan province. Economic impacts improve material well-being; socio-cultural impacts affect social welfare; environmental impacts relate to health and safety; and political impacts influence security. Each domain of well-being significantly affects



residents' life satisfaction. Sanobar et al. (2015) indicated that corporate social responsibility has a significant effect on turnover intentions and that organizational citizenship behavior is significantly influenced by social and legal responsibility. Shokoohi et al. (2014) found that destination social responsibility influences economic, socio-cultural, environmental, and infrastructural factors. Taghdisi et al. (2013) reported that from the perspective of citizens and tourism officials, tourism increases public awareness and raises living standards but may also lead to negative effects such as the erosion of local traditions and increased social and cultural disturbances. Ghadami et al. (2010) revealed that tourism significantly affects the local economy and livelihoods, improving dimensions like employment, income, and housing quality, but negatively impacting health and environmental quality. Alavi Al-Sakkaf et al. (2022) confirmed that destination social responsibility positively influences citizens' perceptions of tourism's economic and socio-cultural impacts. Vincenzo (2020) found that environmental greenness impacts citizens' quality of life, and GDP per capita moderates this relationship in metropolitan areas. Antony and Hong (2019) showed that the four dimensions of social responsibility are directly and indirectly associated with affective organizational commitment through the mediating role of organizational culture. Sonti Kul et al. (2016) reported that tourism brings a sense of well-being and pride to communities, although dissatisfaction with job quality and lack of citizen participation in local governance remain concerns. Jeon et al. (2016) highlighted that the seasonal nature of tourism directly affects citizens' quality of life across economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions. Tokarchuk et al. (2015) identified seven components—personal satisfaction, pleasure, economy, safety, moral congruence, and leisure—as significantly contributing to quality of life in Australia. Styliadis et al. (2014) found that citizens' perceptions of the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism can lead to their support for the tourism industry. Gunduz (2014) showed that job and workplace satisfaction significantly impact quality of life. Unfortunately, tourism employees often achieve workplace satisfaction through non-financial incentives rather than monetary rewards. Kim et al. (2013) found that four tourism-related factors—economic, social, cultural, and environmental—are significantly related to citizens' life satisfaction, including material well-being, social welfare, emotional health, and safety.

Methodology

This study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-survey in terms of implementation method. The statistical population consists of all citizens of Mashhad. In 2023, this population was estimated at around 3.5 million people. Given that the population exceeds 10,000, based on Morgan's table, the required sample size is 384 individuals, selected through non-probability convenience sampling. The data collection tool was a standardized questionnaire developed by Alavi Al-Skaaf (2022), consisting of 24 items. To measure the variables, 6 items were used for destination social responsibility, 3 for perceived economic impacts, 4 for perceived cultural impacts, 3 for perceived environmental impacts, and 8 for quality of life. For assessing construct validity, confirmatory factor analysis, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were applied. Reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. The measurement model's quality indices and R-squared values indicated acceptable quality. The overall Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.70, confirming internal consistency. Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling (SEM) with Smart PLS 3 software.

Findings

In this study, destination social responsibility was considered the independent variable, quality of



life of citizens the dependent variable, and perceived economic, cultural, and environmental impacts as mediating variables. To test the hypotheses based on the conceptual model, SEM and Smart PLS 3 were used. A total of seven hypotheses were examined using the data collected from Mashhad residents. The results revealed that destination social responsibility significantly influences perceived economic (path coefficient: 0.212, t-statistic: 3.847), cultural (path coefficient: 0.582, t-statistic: 15.863), and environmental impacts (path coefficient: 0.576, t-statistic: 14.128). Furthermore, the impact of destination social responsibility on citizens' quality of life through the mediating role of perceived economic, cultural, and environmental impacts was significant (path coefficients: 0.048, 0.126, and 0.050 respectively; t-statistics: 19.31, 56.40, and 22.25 respectively).

Conclusion

Given that the conceptual model of this study is based on Alavi Al-Skaaf (2022), the innovation of this research lies in testing the model within a new statistical population. This study aimed to examine whether destination social responsibility affects citizens' quality of life through the mediating role of perceived economic, cultural, and environmental impacts, focusing on the city of Mashhad. The findings confirmed all hypotheses and aligned with previous research. The results showed that destination social responsibility significantly influences the quality of life of Mashhad's residents. Moreover, the findings revealed that citizens' perceptions of tourism's economic, cultural, and environmental impacts each have a direct and significant effect on their quality of life. Additionally, the mediating role of these perceptions in the relationship between destination social responsibility and quality of life was confirmed. Positive perceptions of economic, cultural, and environmental impacts resulting from socially responsible practices in tourism can enhance residents' quality of life. Therefore, it can be concluded that tourism destination policies and social planning will truly improve the quality of life of citizens when they aim to enhance the perceived positive economic, cultural, and environmental effects within the local community. These findings offer valuable guidance for urban managers and tourism officials to improve social welfare and promote sustainable tourism development in metropolitan cities like Mashhad.

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