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## **FROM PERCEPTION TO SUPPORT: THE ROLE OF POLITICAL BUREAUCRACY IN RURAL TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN LOMBOK, INDONESIA**

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### **Abstract**

Numerous studies emphasise the importance of local governance and governmental support in promoting long-term rural tourist growth. Political bureaucracy, which encompasses the duties and activities of government officials and institutions, plays an important role in developing policies, providing required infrastructure, and fostering stakeholder collaboration. The challenge at hand is the ambiguous relationship between perceived benefits (economic, social, and environmental) and community support influenced by political structures. This study explores moderating role of political bureaucracy on the relationship between the impact of perceived tourism benefits and the community support for rural tourism development in Lombok, Indonesia. The objective is to understand how these perceptions affect support when moderated by political bureaucracy. Data were collected using quantitative methods from 183 residents via online surveys and analysed using SmartPLS SEM for measurement and structural model assessments. The findings revealed no significant relationship between perceived economic and social benefits and community support. However, environmental benefits showed a positive influence. The moderating role of political bureaucracy was found to be minimal. The study suggests that enhancing awareness and empowerment of local communities could improve support for tourism. These insights are vital for policymakers and stakeholders to develop strategies that foster sustainable rural tourism.

**Keywords:** Rural Tourism, Perceived Benefits, Community Support, Political Bureaucracy, Sustainable Development

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Rural tourism has the potential to generate significant economic, social, and environmental benefits for rural communities, engaging travellers with the local culture and environment while promoting economic recovery, social regeneration, and environmental conservation (Litheko & Potgieter, 2021; González et al., 2019). Community engagement in tourism management is crucial for achieving these long-term benefits (Alamineh et al., 2023). However, balancing the community's needs with tourism demands requires careful planning and sustainable management (Özgit et al., 2022). Understanding the factors influencing local community support is vital for designing and implementing successful rural tourism initiatives (Obeidat, 2023).

Political bureaucracy plays a significant role in shaping rural tourism's social, economic, and environmental impacts by developing policies that encourage community engagement, cultural preservation, and social inclusion (Nzomo, 2020; Li et al., 2022). Effective political bureaucracy can support sustainable development through regulations on carrying capacity, waste management, and resource conservation (Hahury et al., 2023). However, rigid bureaucratic processes can impede the implementation of rural tourism initiatives, leading to community frustration and doubts about the viability of tourism benefits (Ilham et al., 2023). Therefore, examining the function of political bureaucracy as a moderating factor is essential to realising the full potential of rural tourism.

Despite extensive research on rural tourism's benefits, the role of political bureaucracy in regulating the relationship between perceived tourism advantages and community support remains underexplored. This study addresses this gap by investigating how political bureaucracy moderates the relationship between perceived economic, social, and environmental benefits and community support in Lombok. Prior studies highlight the importance of local perceptions and administrative perspectives on rural tourism development (Castanho et al., 2021; Isa et al., 2022). This research offers crucial insights for policymakers and stakeholders, aiding in developing strategies that enhance public engagement and support for sustainable rural tourism initiatives. By understanding residents' views on tourism's benefits, the findings provide actionable insights to improve the success and sustainability of rural tourism projects in Lombok.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Rural Tourism**

Rural tourism involves visitors engaging in nature-based activities, agriculture, rural lifestyles, culture, and sightseeing in rural areas characterised by natural landscapes and cultural heritage (UN Tourism, 2023; Dewi & Ginting, 2022). This form of tourism can foster economic growth by generating income, creating

jobs, and promoting local products and services, thus supporting community development (Pimid et al., 2023). The local community's perception of these benefits is crucial to their willingness to support rural tourism development. Rural tourism promotes regional sustainable development by encouraging economic growth and community development (Tong et al., 2022). Visitors immerse themselves in rural lifestyles, participating in outdoor activities and learning about local traditions, while rural areas offer distinctive natural sceneries and rich cultural assets that attract tourists (Aldora et al., 2022). However, the influx of tourists can strain local infrastructure and increase the demand for natural resources, potentially causing environmental damage if not managed responsibly (Tong et al., 2022). Therefore, sustainable and responsible rural tourism management is essential to minimise negative impacts and maximise benefits (Radzanowski & Uğur, 2020).

### **Economic Benefits Perception**

Economic benefits perception in rural tourism includes a variety of factors that lead to the financial well-being of local populations, such as creating employment opportunities for residents, reducing unemployment, and boosting livelihoods in hospitality, tour guiding, transportation, and handicraft production (Odozi et al., 2022). Furthermore, tourism development often necessitates infrastructure improvements, including roads, transportation networks, lodging facilities, and public amenities (Roda & Portela, 2023). These upgrades benefit tourism and residents by enhancing accessibility, connectivity, and overall quality of life. Finally, local economic participation is crucial in shaping perceptions of economic benefits. When local communities actively engage in tourism activities, they can directly capitalise on the economic opportunities it presents (Zantsi & Nkunjana, 2021). Active participation allows the local community to capture a larger share of the economic benefits, contributing to local economic development and empowerment. Thus, the following hypothesis is formed:

*H1: There is a positive relationship between economic benefits perception and support for tourism development among the local community in Lombok.*

### **Social Benefits Perception**

Cultural preservation is a crucial contributor to the social benefits of rural tourism as it promotes local heritage, traditions, and arts, allowing residents to express their cultural identity and share it with visitors, fostering communal pride and cultural continuity (Tsybeskov, 2022). Rural tourism also empowers communities and promotes intercultural interchange by facilitating interactions between tourists and locals, encouraging cultural awareness, tolerance, and global citizenship while breaking down preconceptions (Zheng et al., 2020). Additionally, tourism growth often enhances social infrastructure, such as

community centres, parks, and recreational facilities, benefiting tourists and residents by providing better amenities (Lunt et al., 2022). The perception of social benefits in rural tourism includes cultural preservation, community empowerment, intercultural interchange, social infrastructure development, and social capital augmentation, all of which enhance social well-being, resilience, cultural pride, community participation, and social cohesion. Understanding and encouraging these benefits can significantly improve rural regions' social fabric and quality of life. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formed:

*H2: There is a positive relationship between the perception of social benefits and support for tourism development among the local community in Lombok.*

### **Environmental Benefits Perception**

Rural tourism's environmental benefits include observing and enjoying natural resources, which contribute to their preservation and conservation (Chacon-Ortiz et al., 2022). This engagement fosters awareness of the importance of environmental conservation and the need to protect essential ecosystems. Sustainable practices in rural tourism aim to reduce negative impacts through waste reduction, recycling, energy and water conservation, and the use of environmentally friendly materials and technology (Zhidebekyzy et al., 2022). Rural tourism also provides opportunities for environmental education, allowing visitors to learn about local ecosystems, biodiversity, and conservation initiatives, fostering a sense of environmental responsibility (Butcher et al., 2022). Ecotourism emphasises ethical travel that benefits both the environment and local communities, allowing interactions with natural environments such as mountains, forests, rivers, and wildlife, which in turn support conservation efforts and provide economic benefits to local communities (Chacon-Ortiz et al., 2022). Based on the literature, the following research hypothesis is developed:

*H3: There is a positive relationship between environmental benefits perception and support for tourism development among the local community in Lombok.*

### **Political Bureaucracy and Rural Tourism Support**

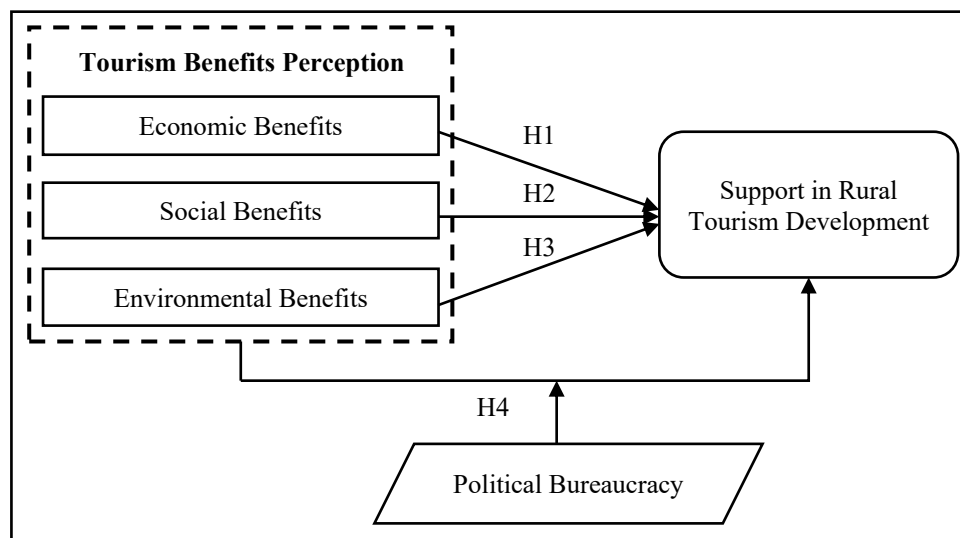
Political bureaucracy refers to the rules and procedures that regulate public project administration, defined by hierarchical structures and regulations (Park & Oh, 2023). It significantly impacts the economic, social, and environmental benefits of rural tourism and the level of support for its development. Policies providing financial incentives, infrastructure development, and marketing assistance can attract investment and encourage economic activity in rural tourism (Xu et al., 2022). Thus, efficient political bureaucracy is critical for maximising economic benefits.

Politically, bureaucracy influences social aspects by developing policies that promote community engagement, cultural preservation, and social inclusion. Local involvement in planning and decision-making enhances community benefits and conservation support (Nzomo, 2020). Sustainable development regulations, such as those governing carrying capacity, waste management, and resource conservation (Li et al., 2022; Hahury et al., 2023), can also minimise environmental impacts. Overall, political bureaucracy's efficiency, competence, and commitment are crucial for maximising rural tourism benefits while minimising negative impacts. This discussion led to the following hypothesis.

*H4: Political bureaucracy moderates the relationship between local perceptions of rural tourism benefits and their support for rural tourism development in Lombok.*

### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts the research structure, which includes independent variables such as perceptions of economic, social, and environmental gains from rural tourism. On the other side, the dependent variable assesses the level of support for rural tourism growth. In this concept, political bureaucracy is a moderating variable, influencing the link between benefit perceptions and tourism support. The research aims to fill gaps in the literature by investigating the impact of economic, social, and environmental benefits on support for rural tourism growth, with political bureaucracy serving as a moderating variable.



**Figure 1:** The conceptual framework.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine the influence of perceived tourism benefits (economic, social, and environmental) on local community support for rural tourism development in Lombok, Indonesia, with political bureaucracy as a moderating variable. The map of the research location is depicted in Figure 2. The research adopts a cross-sectional survey approach, collecting data using online surveys distributed via Google Forms. The survey targeted Lombok residents, focusing on those aged 18 and above and engaged in various sectors, including tourism, agriculture, education, and government. Based on G\*Power estimates, this investigation required at least 95 samples. A total of 183 responses were received and used for the final analysis. The survey instrument was designed to capture the perceptions of economic, social, and environmental benefits, community support for tourism development, and political bureaucracy's influence. Each construct was measured using multiple Likert scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).



**Figure 2:** Map of the research location (Source: Google Map, 2024)

## RESULTS AND FINDING

### Demographic Profile

The following table shows an overall summary of respondents' profiles based on the frequency of gender, age, marital status, education level, employment status, and workplace. The survey included 183 respondents. The demographic profile of the sample showed a predominance of males, who comprised 60.07% of the participants, compared to 39.93% of females. The age distribution indicated a majority in the 25–44-year age group (51.97%), followed by the 45–64-year age group (34.87%), with the youngest cohort (18–24 years) representing 13.16%.

Marital status revealed a reasonably balanced distribution between single individuals (36.14%) and married individuals (47.63%), while 26.23% of participants chose not to disclose their marital status.

Regarding educational attainment, most participants held a bachelor's degree (59.64%), followed by those with a senior high school education (35.54%). A smaller portion had completed junior high school (9.64%), and an even smaller segment held master's or Ph.D. degrees (5.38%). Employment status showed that a substantial majority (72.66%) were employed, with 27.34% being unemployed. In terms of sectors, the agriculture sector had the highest representation (31.72%), followed by the tourism industry (28.62%), education (16.13%), and government (5.38%). Other sectors accounted for the remaining 18.13% of the employment distribution.

### **Reliability and Validity Test**

Bagozzi and Yi (1988) recommended a threshold of 0.7 for item factor loadings, while Churchill (1979) suggested discarding data with loadings below 0.4. Therefore, measures with loadings less than 0.70 were excluded to increase composite reliability (Hair et al., 2011). Both Bagozzi and Yi (1988) and Hair et al. (2014) indicated that an average score of 0.5 shows that each construct can explain more than half of the variance in the items. Loadings were compared to their respective constructs using Partial Least Squares (PLS) analysis to assess each indicator's reliability. Only items with loadings greater than 0.4 were retained. The PLS measurement model's factor loadings and cross-loading values indicated that all items loaded distinctly onto the specified latent variables. Additionally, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for Economic Benefit (EB) Perception, Environmental Benefit (ENB) Perception, Political Bureaucracy (PB), Social Benefit (SB) Perception, and Support for Tourism Development (STD) were significantly higher than the minimum threshold of 0.50. These findings confirm the acceptability of the items used in this study.

**Table 1:** Measurement Model Assessment.

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>SFL</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>CA</b>
EB	EB1	0.776	0.931	0.691	0.910
	EB2	0.848			
	EB3	0.852			
	EB4	0.842			
	EB5	0.853			
	EB6	0.815			
ENB	ENB1	0.798	0.896	0.632	0.854
	ENB2	0.840			
	ENB3	0.804			
	ENB4	0.742			

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>SFL</b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>CA</b>
	ENB5	0.789			
PB	PB1	0.815	0.920	0.657	0.895
	PB2	0.832			
	PB3	0.845			
	PB4	0.850			
	PB5	0.828			
	PB6	0.682			
SB	SB1	0.740	0.928	0.592	0.913
	SB2	0.714			
	SB3	0.819			
	SB4	0.716			
	SB5	0.785			
	SB6	0.626			
	SB7	0.846			
	SB8	0.843			
	SB9	0.808			
STD	STD1	0.849	0.942	0.697	0.927
	STD2	0.856			
	STD3	0.876			
	STD4	0.849			
	STD5	0.801			
	STD6	0.762			
	STD7	0.846			

*Note: SFL: Standardized factor loading; CA: Cronbach's alpha; CR: Composite reliability; AVE: Average variance extracted.*

### **Structural Model**

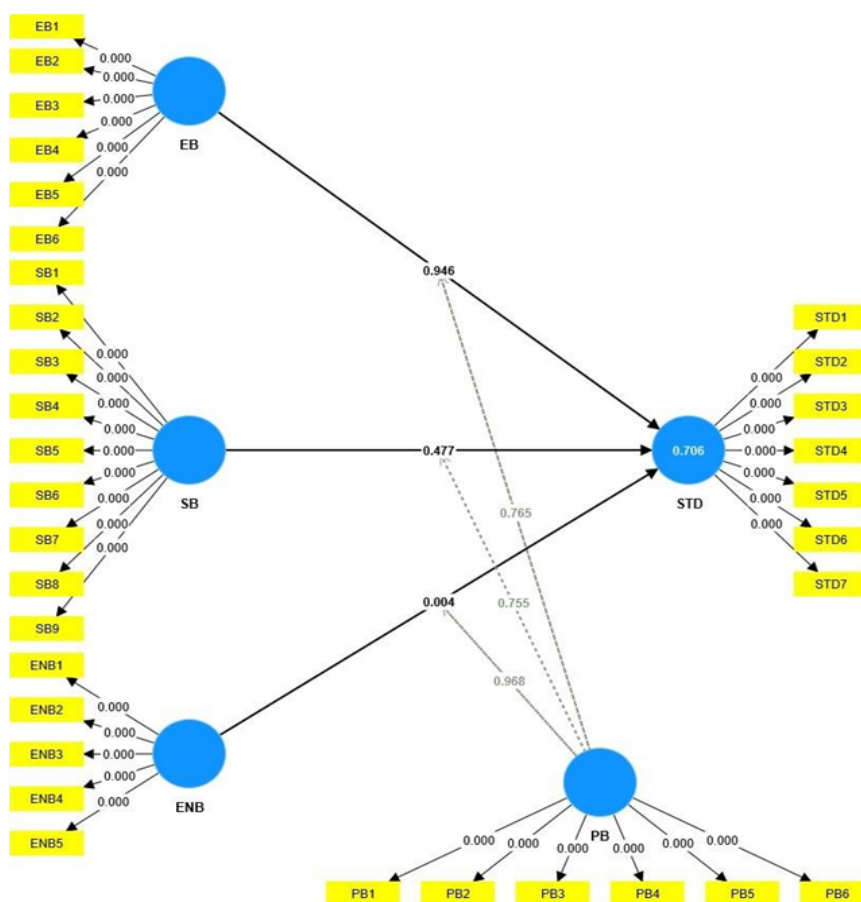
The structural model illustrated the hypothesized relationships between latent variables through specified paths. The researcher could validate or invalidate each hypothesis by examining the structural model. This analysis also provided insights into the magnitude of correlations between dependent and independent variables. Regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ) values were analyzed to assess the significance of path relationships, with their significance determined by t-values obtained through the PLS Bootstrapping procedure. Ultimately, the significance of each hypothesized relationship was based on the generated t-statistics. Table 2 presents the results of a comprehensive statistical analysis investigating the relationships between various factors and their influence on "Support for Rural Tourism Development" (STD). Figure 2 illustrates the standardized path coefficients among the factors. Each row in the table corresponds to a specific hypothesis regarding these relationships.



**Table 2:** Hypothesis testing of the study

Direct Effect	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-values	Decision
EB -> STD	0.008	0.067	0.946	Rejected
ENB -> STD	0.349	2.871	0.004	Accepted
SB -> STD	0.070	0.711	0.477	Rejected
PB x ENB -> STD	-0.003	0.040	0.968	Rejected
PB x SB -> STD	0.030	0.311	0.755	Rejected
PB x EB -> STD	-0.029	0.299	0.765	Rejected

Note:  $p < 0.05$



**Figure 3:** PLS Structural Equation Model.

The analysis reveals a weak positive association between Economic Benefits Perception (EB) and Support in Rural Tourism Development (STD) with

a minimal path coefficient ( $\beta = 0.008$ ), a t-statistic of 0.067, and a high p-value of 0.946, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis. In contrast, the relationship between Environmental Benefits Perception (ENB) and STD is significant, with a substantial path coefficient ( $\beta = 0.349$ ), a high t-statistic (2.871), and a low p-value (0.004). Political Bureaucracy (PB) also strongly correlates with STD ( $\beta = 0.449$ , t-statistic = 3.901, p-value = 0.000). The relationship between Social Benefits Perception (SB) and STD is weak and non-significant ( $\beta = 0.070$ , t-statistic = 0.711, p-value = 0.477).

The analysis of interaction effects between PB and the other variables (EB, SB, and ENB) shows minimal and statistically insignificant path coefficients (-0.029, 0.030, and -0.003, respectively). These findings highlight the varying degrees of influence exerted by different factors on support for rural tourism development, providing valuable insights into what contributes to or hinders the development of rural tourism initiatives.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings indicate insufficient evidence to establish a strong link between perceptions of economic gains and support for tourism growth, contrasting with previous studies such as Bajrami et al. (2020) and Chiciudean et al. (2021), which found a positive relationship. Limited local participation hinders the creation of business opportunities and jobs, highlighting the complex relationship between local involvement and economic growth.

The hypothesis suggesting a positive relationship between the perception of social benefits and support for tourism development was also not supported, contradicting Hammad et al. (2018) and Ali (2020). This finding is significant in shaping conclusions and implications, improving understanding of social benefits' influence on community support for tourism growth. Conversely, compelling evidence of a positive relationship between perceptions of environmental benefits and support for tourism growth was found. The tourism industry positively impacts the environment by acting as a catalyst for protection, consistent with Halim et al. (2022) and Bozdaglar (2023). These insights are crucial for guiding sustainable tourism activities and emphasise the critical role of environmental benefits in garnering local support.

The study highlights the influence of political bureaucracy on rural tourism, examining its moderating role on perceptions of economic, social, and environmental benefits. The findings reveal subtle but significant relationships, underscoring the importance of political processes in shaping community views on tourism benefits. Despite modest correlation coefficients and small effect sizes, the study provides valuable insights into the complex mechanisms by which political bureaucracy influences support for rural tourism development. It emphasises the importance of political stability and well-functioning institutions,

as highlighted by Bhat et al. (2022) and Hassan et al. (2022). Understanding the moderating effect of political bureaucracy is crucial for developing strategies that enhance public engagement and support for sustainable rural tourism initiatives.

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