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## Article

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## Moderating Effect of Sense of Community on the Relationship between Psychological Empowerment and Tourism Policy Participation of Local Residents

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates how citizens' level of psychological empowerment affects policy participation and examines the moderating effect of sense of community on the relationship between individuals' level of psychological empowerment and tourism policy participation in local tourism development. Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted and employed to examine the moderating effect of sense of community on the relationship between psychological empowerment and tourism policy participation. Findings revealed that local residents' psychological empowerment is a significant predictor of participatory behavior in their local tourism policy, and their sense of community moderates the relationship between psychological empowerment and tourism policy participation.

*Keywords: Psychological empowerment, Leadership competence, Policy control, Sense of community, Tourism policy participation*

### 1. Introduction

In the last few decades, changes in sociopolitical and technological environments have made citizen participation and empowerment a cornerstone of democratic decision-making in various contexts (Chamber, 2003; Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Reddel & Woolcock, 2004; Umbach & Wishnoff, 2008). The same trend is true for tourism. Subsequently, tourism studies have emphasized the significance of

citizen participation and empowerment in the host communities of tourism destinations (Allen, Long, Perdue, & Kieselbach, 1988; Reed, 1997; Tosun, 2005).

Citizen empowerment and participation are recognized as critical elements of democratic policy-making and a subject of individuals' everyday life. A diversity of democratic participation propositions have been introduced and implemented for enhancing agreement through public hearings, voting, citizen committees, and so on. These forms of citizen participation have been generally adopted in the democratic policy-making process, but they are sometimes criticized as forms of indirect democracy. Under the indirect democracy system, citizen participation plays a limited role in democratic process (Parry, Moyer, & Day, 1999) because lots of societies

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utilize the representative democracy system as indirect democracy, in which individuals elect political representatives.

The skeptical view of indirect democracy has led citizens and researchers to search for more direct participatory mechanisms to achieve more active involvement in policy-making. It is obvious that there has been a resurgence of interest in policy-making through various forms of citizen participation and empowerment in policy-making since the late 20th century (Umbach & Woshnoff, 2008). Citizen participation experts have stressed the significance of public input in diverse contexts of planning and development as an essential tool for promoting a more democratic perspective in the policy-making processes. In this respect, citizen participation has also been a growing topic in tourism as business, development, and policy-making success are often dependent upon it (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011; Singh, Chung, & Choi, 2017).

Active citizen participation plays an important role in minimizing the conflict between host communities and tourism development to enable the pursuit of long-term capacity while satisfying the demand of tourists (Liu, 2003). Citizen motivation and support to participate in tourism policy-making and promotion derive from various sources, beginning with awareness of policies and programs. It is, therefore, significant to evaluate community assets, which create momentum to carry forward policy and program goals. Two correlates of momentum are individuals' sense of community and active participation in the implementation of tourism policy and promotion (Peterson, Speer, & McMillan, 2008). Empowered individuals can contribute to the development of creative solutions and influence the policy-making process in tourism. Sociopolitical control scale (SPCS) has been utilized to examine the association between empowerment and citizen participation in the last few decades.

Sense of community (SOC) is a construct which contributes to finding the relationship between participatory behavior and sociopolitical control in influencing policy-making that impacts tourism outcomes. Studies have found that SOC explains

significant variation in citizen participation and empowerment in community groups and activities (Peterson & Reid, 2003; Peterson, Speer, & Hughey, 2006). Since the rise in importance of community-based and sustainable tourism, the concepts of citizen participation, empowerment, and sense of community have emerged as significant areas of study (Akama & Kieti, 2007). In this respect, the primary purpose of this study is to investigate how citizens' level of psychological empowerment affects tourism policy participation and to examine the moderating effect of sense of community on the relationship between individuals' level of psychological empowerment and tourism policy participation in local tourism development.

## II. Literature Review

### A. Psychological Empowerment and Sociopolitical Control

Empowerment is a means by which individuals gain mastery over their sociopolitical lives through expanding their strength, competencies and self-efficacy in decision-making activities (Chiang & Jang, 2007; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Speer & Peterson, 2000). Empowerment is said to occur when individuals gain greater control over their lives and participate in the lives of their primary and purposive groups (Speer, Jackson, & Peterson, 2001; Tremblay & Gutberlet, 2010). The notion, therefore, simultaneously includes individual and organizational empowerment. Zimmerman (1990) claimed that the former emphasizes individuals' self-efficacy and control in sociopolitical circumstances while the latter highlights individuals' collaboration within an organization. Empowerment broadly refers to individuals' acts of empowering others while psychological empowerment (PE) represents the internal state of an individual being empowered (Menon, 2001).

Psychological empowerment is not merely an individual component because it includes active

engagement in an individual's community and a direct realization of one's sociopolitical circumstances (Zimmerman, 2000). Therefore, PE is an appropriate measure of self-perception of competence in one's sociopolitical environment. Zimmerman theorized that the three different components of PE, the interactional, behavioral, and intrapersonal, are interrelated. The interactional component of PE represents awareness and understanding of the political situation; the behavioral component refers to purposive actions to affect outcomes; and the intrapersonal component includes individuals' competence, efficacy, and mastery (Ohmer, 2007; Peterson, Lowe, et al., 2006). Among the three components of PE, the intrapersonal element is strongly indicative of individuals' perceived capacity for controlling their sociopolitical contexts, more so than the other two dimensions (Leung, 2009).

During the last few decades, community psychologists have widely used the sociopolitical control scale (SPCS) to measure the intrapersonal component of PE. The SPCS measures how strongly an individual believes in his or her ability and efficacy in sociopolitical contexts (Itzhaky & York, 2003; Peterson, Lowe, Aquilino, & Schneider, 2005; Peterson, Speer, & Peterson, 2011; Smith & Propst, 2001; Zimmerman & Rapport, 1988; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). The SPCS quantifies two primary dimensions of the intrapersonal component of psychological empowerment: leadership competence (LC) and policy control (PC). Policy control refers to the belief that one can influence political circumstances while leadership competence addresses one's sense of leadership efficacy (Peterson, Lowe, et al., 2006; Peterson, Speer, & Hughey, 2006; Zimmerman, 1990).

The SPCS has been employed as a measure to assess public policies in such diverse areas as natural resource decision-making (Smith & Propst, 2001), public health programs (Zimmerman, et al., 1999), ecological resilience (Ungar, 2004), youth programs (Diemer & Blustein, 2006), and social welfare (Markward, et al., 2006). Due to its robustness in diverse fields, scholars have found it worthwhile to

improve the internal consistency of the SPCS. For example, Peterson and his colleagues (2006) demonstrated that the scale's hypothesized two-factor structure attained higher reliability compared to the previous model by rephrasing two negatively worded items so all statements were positively worded.

Tourism scholars have been interested in PE and the SPCS; however, they have mainly focused on the PE of employees in the tourism industry (Chiang & Jang, 2007; Hechanova, Alampay, & Franco, 2006). Also, tourism researchers in these studies utilized only a part of the SPCS. In other words, while tourism researchers have been interested in PE at the professional workplace level, psychologists have addressed PE at the level of community policies and programs.

Communities and local residents of tourist destinations play critical roles in sustainable and positive outcomes in tourism development. Many studies, therefore, have examined residents' attitudes toward tourism development (Anderreck & Vogt, 2000; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Wang & Pfister, 2008; Woosnam, 2012). These studies emphasize residents' perceptions and satisfaction with tourism development.

## B. Tourism Policy Participation

The literature on the importance of citizen participation in sustainable tourism planning and development is vast and growing. Community involvement has been highlighted as playing a significant role in local tourism development because local initiatives in developing tourism attractions are seen as a first preference in tourism development (Boley, Nickerson, & Bosak, 2011; Dredge, 2006; Prentice, 1993). Increasingly, studies are paying attention to host community attitudes toward tourism development such as host community reactions to the impact of tourism (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; Lee, 2017; Zhang, Inbakaran, & Jackson, 2006), and development of community-based tourism (Blackstock, 2005; Novelli & Gebhardt, 2007; Wearing & McDonald, 2002). These studies argue that citizen participation

in host communities is necessary to pursue economic benefits while simultaneously ensuring socio-cultural and environmental protection for the communities. Sustainable tourism can be an answer to achieving balance between economic outcomes and protection of host communities' environments, but the benefits must be fairly distributed to various stakeholders such as local residents, tourists, operators, and regulators (Hardy & Beeton, 2001).

It is considered important for host communities to take responsibility for their participation and engagement in tourism policy and development (Jackson & Morpeth, 1999). The stakeholders in the host communities of tourism destinations are often diverse and unintegrated. As a result, they lack a coherent voice. Citizen participation can not only result in improved public support and comprehension of the policy-making process, but it can also address diverse stakeholders' preferences and needs. Tourism can also create networks among businesses, developers, governments, and local communities in locales with significant tourism development (Byrd, 2007). Some studies indicate that effective community-based tourism development, which is based on such networks and community-based tourism, is derived from active citizen participation in host communities (Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Okazaki, 2008; Sebele, 2010).

In order to achieve active community involvement and citizen participation, governments and development authorities should encourage host communities to take action toward policy-making activities (Keogh, 1990; Lewis & Newsome, 2003; Yankelovich, 1991). Such collaborative policy-making among government agencies, businesses, and host communities is recognized as a critical feature of sustainable tourism development (Buckley, Pickering, & Weaver, 2003). This is because community involvement allows governments and tourism developers to understand local norms and values that need to be addressed through collaborative planning (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Stimulating community involvement and collaboration among stakeholders results in three beneficial outcomes: 1) community ownership; 2) accessibility of planning or management resources; and 3) maintaining

a broad stakeholder base by involving local NGOs (Yates, Stein, & Wyman, 2010). Conflict avoidance or minimization is another highly touted goal of collaborative planning (Phi, Dredge, & Whitford, 2014).

To conclude, tourism research in the last few decades has witnessed the strong role of citizen participation in tourism development. Parallel to tourism research findings, community psychologists have claimed that psychologically empowered communities and citizens exert influence on their external sociopolitical circumstances and also act to improve their environments (Peterson & Zimmerman, 2004; Rapport, 1984; Zimmerman, et al., 1992). As such, psychological empowerment of citizens is an indicator of the success of citizen participation in host communities in policy-making processes, including tourism development.

### C. Sense of Community

The recognition of community has also been a popular research topic for tourism scholars. Investigators have found that a key component of achieving sustainable tourism is the appreciation of local communities' needs and preferences as well as socio-cultural and physical values (Blackstock, 2005; Simpson, 2008). Community attachment plays an important role in assessing the impacts of tourism development, as a significant positive relationship between tourism development and community attachment has been found (Látková & Vogt, 2012).

While these tourism studies have focused on the relationship between the tenure of residency of community members and their attitudes toward tourism development, community psychologists have focused their attention more on the psychological features of community including feeling and belonging. In particular, sense of community has been found to be a key variable related to empowerment and participatory behaviors related to public health (Goodman, et al., 1998; Peterson & Reid, 2003).

Sarason (1974) introduced sense of community (SOC) as a significant principle of community

psychology. However, there was no consensus regarding the definition, model, or method of investigating sense of community before McMillan and Chavis (1986) developed a theory in 1986. They proposed four elements of sense of community: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection.

Much of the published literature has examined the variables related to a strong sense of community, but there are few robust findings (Colombo, Mosso, & DePiccoli, 2001; Peterson, et al., 2008). One reason for this lack of consistent findings is that certain aspects of a sense of community differ from setting to setting (Hill, 1996; Peterson et al., 2006). Regardless of the debate on the causes of inconsistent findings, the four elements of sense of community by McMillan and Chavis have been widely studied in a variety of contexts such as neighborhood solidarity (Brodsky & Marx, 2001; Colombo, et al., 2001), psychological rehabilitation (Herman et al., 2005), community organizations (Hughey, Speer, & Peterson, 1999), and international communities of interest (Obst, Zinkiewicz, & Smith, 2002). Studies find that a sense of community affects local action (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990) and psychological empowerment (Peterson & Reid, 2003).

### III. Methods

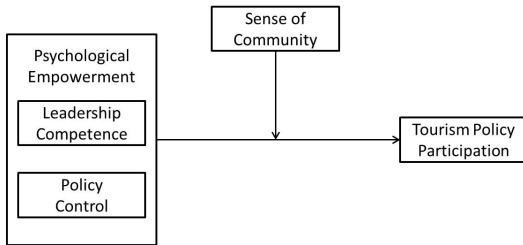
To gather data, a questionnaire survey was conducted in the city of Jeongeup, located in the southwestern part of South Korea. The city was selected as a research area because it has actively incubated the local-based tourism industry with a focus on its cultural and farm tourism activities. This has been achieved through active citizen participation and empowerment to improve the financial independence of individuals and businesses.

The study population consisted of city residents who were more than 19 years old, and were currently living in the city as of 2015. As of 2015, the total

number of households in the city was approximately 40,000; therefore, to achieve a plus or minus 3% sampling error, the required sample size was approximately 1,040 households (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). Based on the households' mailing addresses, every 38th household was systematically selected, and 1,040 surveys were mailed. In total, 581 city residents completed the household survey (response rate: 55.9%), and the citywide margin of error was 2.01% with a 95% confidence level.

The survey items for this study were developed based on previous studies. A total of 17 items of residents' intrapersonal components of psychological empowerment toward local tourism policy were adopted and modified from the original sociopolitical control scales' 17 items enumerated in previous studies of Zimmerman and Zahiser (1991), Smith and Propst (2001), and Peterson and his colleagues (2006). This study used a reduced, four-item version of sense of community scale developed by Peterson and Reid (2008), and employed Smith and Propst's (2001) participatory behavior scale modified to reflected tourism policy participation context. The response format for all the items was a five-point Likert scale from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. The reason for these four factors' integration into the survey was based on previous studies (Ohmer, 2007; Wellman et al., 2001) which demonstrated that psychologically empowered citizens with high level of sense of community actively participated in local policies and development.

Survey data were analyzed in several steps. Preliminary statistics were calculated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Descriptive statistics were calculated to determine the distributional characteristics of each variable including the means, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis (Babbie, 2001). Cronbach's alpha test, which was conducted in order to examine reliability and internal consistency, indicates the degree of consistency within responses to a set of questions (Vaske, 2008). Exploratory factor analysis was used for evaluating the psychometric properties of the various scales in this study. Finally, hierarchical



**Figure 1.** Hypothesis model

multiple regression was conducted to assess the effect of moderation, and the hypothesis model of this study is depicted in Figure 1.

## IV. Results

The final sample consisted of 52.9% males and 47.1% females. The average age of respondents was approximately 43 years and their average monthly income was USD 1,764. For those who were born in the city (79.3%), the average length of time living there was 29 years. Less than half of the survey participants (47.6%) had more than a high school education.

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted through principal components factor analysis of the 28 items, utilizing Varimax and Oblique rotations. The four hypothesized factors, leadership competence (LC), policy control (PC), tourism policy participation (TPP), and sense of community (SOC) emerged and explained 72.45% of the model variance. The items of this study had loads greater than 0.654. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.938, above the recommended value of 0.6 (Vaske, 2008), and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant. The eight items comprising LC had a high alpha reliability of 0.902, which falls within the acceptable level. The Cronbach's alpha for PC in the study was 0.876, indicating a high degree of internal consistency. The four items of SOC showed satisfactory reliability

**Table 1.** Exploratory Factor Analysis of LC, PC, TPP, and SOC

Item*	Factor Loading			
	Factor1 LC	Factor2 PC	Factor3 TPP	Factor4 SOC
LC1	.811			
LC2	.801			
LC3	.846			
LC4	.868			
LC5	.837			
LC6	.834			
LC7	.800			
LC8	.800			
PC1		.739		
PC2		.784		
PC3		.785		
PC4		.793		
PC5		.822		
PC6		.750		
PC7		.784		
PC8		.680		
PC9		.654		
TTP1			.745	
TTP2			.861	
TTP3			.817	
TTP4			.828	
TTP5			.877	
TTP6			.879	
TTP7			.837	
SOC1				.824
SOC2				.856
SOC3				.771
SOC4				.735
Eigenvalue	11.484	3.899	2.653	2.250
% of Total Variance	41.013	13.926	9.476	8.035
Total Variance				72.450

\*See Appendix

with an alpha score of 0.921 for the scale. The Cronbach's alpha of TPP was 0.815, which reached conventional standards for scale reliability.

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted in three steps and employed to examine

the moderating effect of SOC on the relationship between psychological empowerment, which consisted of leadership competence and policy control, and tourism policy participation. Results are provided below in Table 2. In the first model, it was found that in the first step of hierarchical multiple regression analysis, the independent variable leadership competence ( $\beta=0.625$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) significantly predicted tourism policy participation, and accounted for 52.4% of the variance. In the second step, sense of community was added to the model and it was observed that leadership competence ( $\beta =0.478$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and sense of community ( $\beta =0.245$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) significantly predicted tourism policy participation,  $\Delta R^2=0.043$ . In the third step, the interaction variable gathered from multiplication of leadership competence and sense of community was added to the analysis and it was found that the interaction variable ( $\beta =0.075$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) significantly predicted tourism policy participation together with the two other variables, leadership competence ( $\beta =0.513$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and sense of community ( $\beta =0.201$ ,  $p<0.001$ ),  $\Delta R^2=0.011$ .

In the second model, it was found that in the first step, 42.4% of the variance in tourism policy participation was predicted by policy control ( $\beta$

$=0.627$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). In the second step, 46.3% of the variance in tourism policy participation was simultaneously predicted by policy control ( $\beta =0.452$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and sense of community ( $\beta =0.312$ ,  $p<0.001$ ),  $\Delta R^2=0.039$ . In the final step, the interaction variable gathered from multiplication of policy control and sense of community was added to the analysis and it was found out that the interaction variable ( $\beta =0.067$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) significantly predicted tourism policy participation together with the two other variables, policy control ( $\beta =0.478$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and sense of community ( $\beta =0.295$ ,  $p<0.001$ ),  $\Delta R^2=0.015$ .

The fact that the interaction variable was found to have a significant effect on TPP indicated that there was a significant difference in the curve of residents of the city whose sense of community levels differed in the relationship between PE (LC and PC) and TPP levels. This indicated a moderation effect of SC on the relationship between PE and TPP; therefore, the research question of the study is empirically supported.

**Table 2.** The Moderating Effects of SOC between PE (LC and PC) and TPP

Independent Variable		Dependent Variable: Tourism Policy Participation		
		b(Step 1)	b(Step 2)	b(Step 3)
Model 1	LC(Leadership Competence)	.625***	.478***	.513***
	SOC(Sense of Community)		.245***	.201***
	LC * SOC(Interaction)			.075**
	$R^2$	.524***	.567***	.578***
	$\Delta R^2$		.043***	.011*
	$F$	204.754***	124.501***	87.814***
Model 2	PC(Policy Control)	.627***	.452***	.472***
	SOC(Sense of Community)		.312***	.295***
	PC * SOC(Interaction)			.067**
	$R^2$	.424***	.463***	.478***
	$\Delta R^2$		.039***	.015*
	$F$	142.341***	83.718***	57.987***

Note: N=581. The coefficients are unstandardized b weights. \* $p<0.05$  \*\* $p<0.01$  \*\*\* $p<0.001$



## V. Conclusions

Citizen empowerment and participation have become significant areas of study in tourism research since the rise in importance of community-based and sustainable tourism practices. Psychologically empowered individuals can contribute to the development of creative solutions in policy-making processes, including local tourism policy. The sociopolitical control scale (SPCS), which consists of leadership competence (LC) and policy control (PE), has been widely employed to investigate the relationship between the intrapersonal component of psychological empowerment (PE) and citizen participation in public policies and programs in the last few decades.

In this regard, the research studied the moderating effect of sense of community on the relationship between PE and TPP of local residents of the city of Jeongeup, South Korea. Hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to find the moderating effect. The empirical results confirmed that local residents' level of sense of community had a significant influence on the relationship between their psychological empowerment and tourism policy participation. Findings revealed that local residents' PE, such as LC and PC toward tourism policy-making, is a significant predictor of participatory behavior in their local tourism policy, and their SOC, which is the belonging of a community, moderates the relationship between PE and TPP. The moderating hypothesis of the study implies that SOC has significant moderating effect on relationships between LC, PC, and TPP: with the enhancement of SOC level, positive impacts of LC and PC on TPP are both increasingly strong.

The results of this study can provide several implications to policymakers and tourism planners. First, this study represents one of few attempts to examine the moderating role of sense of community on the relationship between local residents' psychological empowerment and participatory behavior toward tourism policy-making processes. Second, this research stresses the importance of

sociopolitical indicators of success such as local residents' psychological empowerment and participation in tourism policy and planning efforts. Third, tourism research has emphasized that those individuals who have strong ties to their communities become empowered to take part in policy-making relevant to local-based tourism development (Blackstock, 2005). This means that when local residents perceive that they are psychologically empowered, their participatory behavior toward tourism policy with high level of sense of community can be enhanced.

Tourism development has also been acknowledged as a leading economic force and has the potential to contribute to the rejuvenation of the economy of nations as well as local communities. Yet, mass tourism is often associated with negative impacts such as destruction of natural, social, and cultural circumstances of host communities of tourism destinations (Chapman & Speake, 2011). Tourism is a system of which host communities and tourism development are integral parts, but many impacts of tourism development are mainly evaluated with economically-oriented indices. Social impacts, such as the level of citizen participation and empowerment, represent additional important indicators of successful tourism development.

Citizen participation and empowerment are critical factors in the minimization of tension between economic growth and protection of tourism resources. The realization of this concept has encouraged tourism scholars to study the issues of host community involvement and citizen participation in tourism. These two subjects are significantly vital to the overall tourism system because knowing how empowered citizens feel, whether or not they see themselves as participants, and/or are taking actions to be active participants, should be of broad interest to policymakers. Engaging residents in the planning process can improve the quality of development initiatives and support for tourism policy, creating better experiences at tourism destinations.

The limitations suggest several directions for future study. First, it is recommended that future research test the full number of items of SOC for more valid

and reliable measurement properties in the tourism domain. Even though studies yielded appropriate validity and reliability from the reduced items of the construct, a future study is recommended to test the items with rephrased questions for the tourism domain. Second, research needs to adopt the latent growth model because the model is an effective analytical tool in examining individuals' psychological changes over time; furthermore, individuals' psychological empowerment is an internal status so it is continuously changing.

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## Appendix. Items of Major Variables

Item	Statement
LC1	I am often a leader in groups.
LC2	I would prefer to be a leader rather than follower.
LC3	I would rather have a leadership role when I am involved in a group project.
LC4	I can usually organize people to get things done.
LC5	Other people usually follow my ideas.
LC6	I find it very easy to talk in front of a group.
LC7	I like to work on solving a problem myself rather than wait and see if someone else will deal with it.
LC8	I like trying new things that are challenging to me.
PC1	I enjoy political participation because I want to have as much say as possible in influencing an agency like the Jeongup Department of Four Season Tourism Development.
PC2	A person like me can really understand what is going on with the Jeongup Department of Four Season Tourism Development.
PC3	I feel like I have a pretty good understanding of the important tourism development decision making process in the city.
PC4	People like me are generally well qualified to participate in the tourism development decision making process in the city.
PC5	It makes a difference who I support for local tourism development because who I support will represent my interests.
PC6	There are plenty of ways for people like me to have a say in what the local tourism development agency does.
PC7	It is important to me that I actively participate in local tourism development issues.
PC8	Most tourism development agency officials in the city would listen to me.
PC9	Local tourism development is important to support.
TTP1	I voted regularly in national/regional election.
TTP2	I communicated regularly with a public official or government agency.
TTP3	I regularly attended meetings of a voluntary organization.
TTP4	I communicated with the City Department of Four Season Tourism or National Park Service.
TTP5	I organized a group of people around tourism development issues.
TTP6	I served on tourism development commission, advisory board, or planning team.
TTP7	I belong to a tourism related organization.
SOC1	My neighborhood or community helps me fulfill my needs.
SOC2	I feel like a member of my neighborhood or community.
SOC3	I have a say about what goes on in my neighborhood or community.
SOC4	I have a good bond with others in my neighborhood or community.