

58. RESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF LARNACA, CYPRUS

Elena Spanou Tripinioti, DProf

Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management
Dubai, UAE

Elena.Tripinioti@eahm.ac

Alexis Saveriades, Ph.D

Cyprus University of Technology

Alexis.saveriades@cut.ac.cy

Anna Farmaki, Ph.D

Cyprus University of Technology

Anna.farmaki@cut.ac.cy

ABSTRACT

It has been argued that residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism development in Island destinations is important for their future sustainability. This study aims to examine residents' perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism development by focusing on the city of Larnaca, Cyprus. Through a mixed method approach, this study yields insights on residents' perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism development, particularly in relation to the socio-cultural impacts of tourism. Residents recognise the role that the developmental limitations of small Island destinations play on the formation of their attitude. Conclusively, this study contributes a theoretical framework which tourism planners in Island destinations utilise to evaluate future tourism projects and strengthen residents' participation in the decision-making process.

Keywords: Resident perceptions, sustainable tourism; Island destination; Larnaca; Cyprus.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered a resource dependent industry. Given its fragmented and profit-oriented nature, the inclusion of the concept of sustainability in tourism planning further complexifies tourism development (Sharpley, 2014), particularly in Island destinations which are characterised by vulnerability and resource limitations. Residents' perceptions and attitudes play a significant role in sustainable tourism development, wherein collaboration on the coordination of resources and community support of tourism development are required for the successful implementation of sustainable tourism principles. Nonetheless, concerns have been raised regarding the inclusiveness of residents in tourism planning and decision-making. Thus, the cooperation of residents in tourism development, especially in small Island communities, is vital due to the proximity of the exchange between residents and tourists, the utilisation of common resources and the increasing conflict between tourism and other sectors as a result of global resource depletion (Becken & Job, 2014). Recognised as one of the most influential conceptual paradigms for understanding social behaviour and its relevance regarding the "power element" of the exchange between the host community and tourists, this study utilises the Social Exchange Theory (SET) in an attempt to explore residents' perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism development within an island destination context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Residents' Perceptions and Attitudes toward tourism

Tourism is a community industry, in which residents are affected by either positive and/or negative changes incurred, relative to economical, socio-cultural and environmental factors. A such, a considerable body of research in the area of residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism development exists. Whilst earlier studies concentrated predominantly on economic effects of tourism development, over the years tourism was evaluated through a more impartial approach aiming in identifying positive and negative impacts to the local community (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). Overall, it has been recognised that tourism has the ability to greatly influence local communities and several researchers have attempted to look beyond the economic impacts into the area of socio-environmental impacts that tourism may impose on local communities (Bramwell, Higham, Lane, & Miller, 2016). Nonetheless, past studies reported mixed findings on residents' perceptions of tourism (Eusébio, Vieira & Lima, 2018). On the one hand, the different types of hosts and visitors have been recognised as yielding the

various forms of encounters, therefore, influencing perceived impacts (Kastenholz, Carneiro, Eusébio and Figueiredo, 2013). Additionally, a wide range of intrinsic and extrinsic factors have been recognised as influencing residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism development (Sharpley, 2014) including community attachment (Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Kock, & Ramayah, 2015) and economic dependency (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2015).

Within this context, the most utilised theory in examining residents' perceptions is the SET which attempts to comprehend the social behaviour of humans towards economic activities (Wang & Chen, 2015; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015; Vargas-Sánchez, et al., 2015). The SET suggests that residents are likely to support tourism development if they perceive that the expected benefits exceed the costs (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). With power being a significant element during the exchange between two actors, outcomes are evaluated from a privileged or a disadvantaged position. This power element is more evident in the case of Islands, due to their fragile environment and resource limitations. Thus, by utilising the SET, this study examines residents' perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism development in relation to the socio-cultural impacts, within an Island's context. The study focuses on the context of Larnaca, Cyprus which is a well-known Island destination in the Mediterranean. Informed by the literature review on Island tourism, variables related to Island destinations such as Island characteristics, the political situation, the economic crisis etc are considered as contributing factors.

DATA COLLECTION

An exploratory sequential design was utilised based on a mixed qualitative/quantitative approach that enabled the residents to contribute in the design process, by creating an instrument that was more suitable to the specific study area. Findings were interpreted in light of the SET and triangulated to validate themes.

Qualitative research

In-depth interviews were conducted with Larnaca residents, based on non-probability judgment and snowball sampling through personal and professional contacts that were conveniently available. In order to minimise the element of bias and achieve homogeneity as well as triangulation, a wide range of subject themes were chosen. Questions were exploratory in nature, based on an initial template that permitted a level of flexibility, regarding issues addressed by the respondents. By the 12th interview, the study reached saturation, so all three researchers agreed to close the interviewing cycle at the 15th interview. The sample included 8 female respondents and 7 male respondents. The qualitative data were analysed using Directed Thematic Content Analysis and Discourse Analysis based on cognitive, affective and behavioural related themes in light of the SET. This continuous process allowed the researchers to identify themes and make an attempt to verify and qualify them in order to identify further themes and classify them into categories. Qualitative findings were utilized through inductive method in order to assist in the development of the quantitative research instrument in order to create an instrument that is more applicable to Cyprus' case. Qualitative findings are also used to aid in the interpretation of the results. The implications of these findings are discussed in the concluding section of this paper.

Qualitative Findings

Through the Content Analysis, it is evident that all residents expressed knowledge of the role that tourism plays in the development of the region. Residents perceive a positive perception and attitude which is consistent throughout all three aspects of an attitude, with quite high scores in themes relative to the level of current (12%); future development in the area (11%); Government and Municipality involvement in tourism development (10%); limitations of future development (10%); Island characteristics (9%); positive feelings to tourism development (10%); positive impacts of tourism (9%); and, positive intention to act (9%). Negative themes related to all three aspect such as increase in crime and divorce rates, have scored lower (3% and 4%), thus indicating an insignificant association between residents' perception and attitudes of negative tourism impacts and the residents' attitudes toward tourism highlighted in the literature (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). Overall, residents express a positive perception and attitude towards the benefits that outweigh the costs of tourism development, thus demonstrating a pro-tourism behaviour consistent with the literature (Hales & Larkin, 2018; Park, Nunkoo, & Yoon, 2015). In light of the SET, residents perceive this exchange as being unbalanced through themes related to limitations of future development and Island characteristics such as the political and economic situation of the Island, issues related to seasonality and the overall management of the industry. To stimulate a more sustainable tourism industry and tackle the seasonality issue, the respondents suggested promoting Larnaca as an all year-round destination, with the development of new hotels in the area, as well as theme parks and other forms of

tourism such as conference tourism and sports tourism. Residents perceive that tourism development yields substantial revenues that in turn will aid in the development of the regional and national economy at large.

Quantitative Research

The quantitative research aimed in reaching a representative sample of the population, in order to complement the qualitative research of the study in the evaluation of the selected themes onto a wider sample of the population through probability simple random sampling. In this stage, the intention was not to acquire a specific number from each group, but to acquire a representative sample of the population. Towards this end, a total of 1500 questionnaires were distributed to achieve the 382 questionnaire sample size, requested for the study, resulting in 399 completed questionnaires, a total of 26% response rate. Three questionnaires were omitted due to a large number of missing values providing 396 valid questionnaires for analysis. Out of the 396 questionnaires, male respondents accounted for 42% and female respondents for 56% with a 2% no response rate. Within the sample, respondents were representative of the overall population of Cyprus based on the annual demographic report of the Republic of Cyprus Statistical Services for 2013, covering the main variables selected such as: gender, age group, life cycle stage, educational background and occupation of the specific community during that particular period of time.

Instrument

The exploratory sequential design facilitated in the building of an instrument that had its theoretical basis in the SET and is attributed to and adapted from the literature (Lankford and Howard, 1994; Juroski, Uysal, and Williams, 1997; Gursoy, and Rutherford, 2004; Imbakaran and Jackson, 2006). The instrument utilised was a self-completed questionnaire containing three sections and was coded to allow easier and more accurate data analysis. Section 1: included 24 statements divided in four parts with eight statements including positive and negative items mixed on each of the three aspects of an attitude. Each part evaluating a different factor: socio-cultural impacts of tourism; tourism and community change; and tourism's role in the local community; tourism and the role of the State. Section 2 included 6 questions revolving around behavioural aspects, including positive and negative intention to act towards tourism development. Section 3 included demographic questions i.e. gender, age, educational level, and other related information. Statements were based on a 5-point Likert type scale response (1 strongly disagree, 2, disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly). Questionnaires were accompanied by a letter of consent including information regarding the return procedure and a stamped self-addressed envelope to encourage replies. When the instrument was designed it was pre-piloted and then piloted again before it was finalized.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

The quantitative data collected was coded and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, V.19). The 24 statements were then subjected to an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), using SPSS, with the intent to identify a large number of relationships amongst interval level variables and attempt to understand the relation amongst variables and the concepts underlining them. Kaiser-Meyer-Okin overall measure of sampling adequacy (KMO) value was (.72) the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value was significant (p:000) indicating a Sig value of (.05). These results suggested that factor analysis was appropriate on the data-set. In order to reinforce the reliability of the factor analysis a sample of at least 300 cases was achieved with 16 cases per item to be evaluated. The strength of the inter correlations between the statements was also evaluated with a correlation matrix indicating $r = .3$ or greater.

EFA Findings

The EFA yielded 7 factors that explained 62.43 % of the variance in perceptions and attitudes towards tourism. The proportion of the variance of each item h^2 ranged between .55 and .76 (see Table 1 for summary of the results of the EFA).

Table 1
Summary of the results Factor Analysis

Factor	Mean	Std. Dev.
1. Tourism and community positive changes	4,14	,69
2. Perceived Socio-cultural benefits of tourism	3,71	,79
3. Tourism's role in the local community	4,19	,64
4. Tourism and the role of the state	4,67	,62
5. Tourism impacts and island countries	3,32	,65
6. Perceived negative Socio-cultural impacts of tourism	3,06	,76
7. Tourism and community concerns.	3,74	,52

Factor 1 consisted of five items relating to Tourism positive changes and explained the 18.09% of the variance within the data. Positive changes within the community includes infrastructure, development of the hospitality industry, restoration of historic buildings and in general, the quality of life which is also evident in the literature (Mathew and Sreejesh, 2017; Özel and Kozak, 2017; Puhakka, Sarkki, Cottrell, & Siikamäki, 2009). Residents acknowledge the positive contribution of tourism in their community even though at times they perceive that it may not contribute as much as it could to the community (Canavan, 2011). *Factor 2* consisted of three items related to socio-cultural impacts and explained the 10.39% of the variance. Residents perceive to have a positive attitude towards the sociocultural impacts of tourism in their community and are therefore inclined to be more supportive and willing to participate in the exchange, in line with the SET and the literature (Özel and Kozak, 2017; Canavan, 2014). *Factor 3* consisted of three items related to the role of tourism in the community and explained the 8.80% of the variance. Residents acknowledged the potential contribution of tourism development to their community and were willing to offer regeneration strategies aiming in a more sustainable industry by reducing seasonality and attracting an all year-round tourist type that is more nature and culture oriented (Brooker & Burgess, 2008). *Factor 4* consisted of three items related to tourism and the role of the state and explained the 7.41% of the variance. Residents expressed concerns regarding the intensity of engagement of the community in tourism-related issues and feel the need to become more involved and empowered in decision making within their community as evident in the literature (Hales & Larkin, 2018). *Factor 5* consisted of five items related to island characteristics and explained the 6.52% of the variance. The inclusion of *Factor 5* related to Island destinations demonstrates a possible connection between residents' attitudes towards tourism development and Island limitations. Residents acknowledge the limitations emanating from tourism development in Island economies and consider tourism as a profitable means to develop their region. However, at the same time, the expressed concerns regarding the sustainability of this path is enacted from the findings of the qualitative research. The last two factors included the lowest variance. *Factor 6* consisted of 3 items related to the negative socio-cultural impacts which justifies the 5.73 % of the variance. Finally, *Factor 7* consisted of only 2 items relative to concerns which, in turn, justify the 5.50% of the variance. As *Factor 7* yielded only two variables it may be excluded from future studies.

Residents are aware that even though tourism has positive contributions to their community in general, tourism development can also negatively influence the values, traditions and culture by increasing the negative socio-cultural impacts such as crime rate and divorce rate as highlighted in the literature (Özel and Kozak, 2017). However, it must be noted that based on the size and structure of the population during the period of the study Cyprus was holding a high rate of emigration in with 21 emigrants per 1 000 (European Commission- Eurostat:2016). Therefore, based on the data available it is difficult to isolate their concerns solely on tourists and not on foreigner residents in general.

The results of the EFA indicate the necessity for rapid changes in destination management which will pave the way towards a more sustainable development concept and with particular emphasis on the co-ordination between all stakeholders regardless of their level of involvement in tourism.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Pearson Correlation was then utilized to explore the relationship between the factors derived from the EFA and the behavioural statements, in terms of the strength and the direction of the relationship. For each pair of variables evaluated, the SPSS system provided the (r) value; the significance level; and, the number of cases given. The direction of the relationship was evaluated through the negative sign in front of the (r), which referred to a negative correlation between the two variables. Care was taken with negatively worded questions during analysis, which were reversed before scoring.

Pearson Correlation Findings

The results of the qualitative research and the EFA were reinforced through the Pearson Correlation Analysis. The Pearson Correlation Analysis showed a statistically significant positive relationship between the residents' intention to act and the factors derived on one hand, and a positive intention to act towards tourism development on the other *Factor 1 and 2* are linked with the benefits regarding the development of tourism. Thus in light of the SET residents' tend to act pro tourism as they perceive the encounter to be profitable. *Factor 3 and 4* are relative towards the organisation and the management of the tourism industry. Residents feel the need to participate in decision making regarding the development of their community and feel very strongly about the way that their destination is managed. *Factor 5*, evaluating Island characteristics is linked with all others factors as it acknowledges the role that Island characteristics play on the formation of residents' perceptions and attitudes. *Factors 6 and 7* are linked to the costs regarding the development of tourism. Residents feel strongly about the sustainable development of their community. Worth mentioning here is that the on-going issue regarding the construction of an industrial harbour versus a marina and a more tourism-oriented future in the area,

demonstrates residents' willingness to protest for tourism development as they recognise that the benefits outweigh any possible costs to the community, contrary to other types of development. This act came to confirm the results of this study, which concluded that residents will act upon their attitude and will protest if they feel that the developments are not to their benefit as evident in the literature (Hales & Larkin, 2018). Protest action is considered as a shift from "unsustainable" to sustainable tourism (Dwyer, 2017). It must be noted here that this correlation is based on the specific sample tested, as well as the political, economic, environmental and social factors related to the specific community, at that specific time the data was collected.

CONCLUSION

This study represents an attempt to explore the role of Island characteristics in the formation of residents' perceptions and attitudes. Through the utilisation of a mixed method approach, the researchers have managed to shed some light in an area of research that has not been investigated before. The quantitative data reinforced and complemented the results derived from the qualitative data and the previous studies. The results of the study confirm that residents support tourism development in the Larnaca region, while demonstrating awareness of their destinations' unique characteristics, the positive and negative impacts relative to sustainable tourism development as well as the need for careful monitoring regarding any future development opportunities. In light of the SET, the findings of this study support that the host-tourist exchange is unbalanced and as such, the level of dependency of Island states on tourism, coupled with their unique characteristics, becomes a contributing factor in the formation of residents' perceptions and attitudes towards sustainable tourism development. It appears that residents perceive that even though tourism can be comprised by a number of potentially unsustainable facets, if properly managed, it is perceived as a far more sustainable development option for their community, than other development options.

As residents' perceptions and attitudes toward tourism development change with time, it would be applicable to adopt a longitudinal approach that will contribute to the further understanding of Island characteristics as well as validate the results of the existing study. Through a longitudinal approach the researchers will be given the opportunity to investigate additional variables such as education, occupation, proximity to tourism facilities, which were out of the scope of this study, and also further explore this relationship with other areas of the Island in order to compare results and finally validate the instrument.

REFERENCES

- Becken, S. & Job, H. (2014). Protected areas in an era of global-local change. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 22(4), 507-527.
- Bramwell, B., Higham, J., Lane, B., & Miller, G. (2017). Twenty-Five Years of Sustainable Tourism and the Journal of Sustainable Tourism: Looking Back and Moving Forward. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 25, 1-9.
- Brooker, E., & Burgess, J. (2008). Marketing destination Niagra effectively through the tourism life cycle. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20(3), 278-292.
- Canavan, B. (2012). The extent and role of domestic tourism in a small island: The case of the Isle of Man. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(3), 340-352.
- Canavan, B. (2014). Sustainable tourism: development, decline and de-growth. Management issues from the Isle of Man, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 22:1, and 127-147.
- European Commission- Eurostat. (2016). Retrieved June 15, 2016, from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics
- Eusébio, C., Vieira, L.A & Lima, S. (2018) Place attachment, host-tourist interactions, and residents' attitudes towards tourism development: the case of Boa Vista Island in Cape Verde, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26:6, 890-909.
- Dwyer, L. (2018) Saluting while the ship sinks: the necessity for tourism paradigm change, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26:1, 29-48.
- Gursoy, D., & Rutherford, D. G. (2004). Host attitudes towards tourism. An improved structural model. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol:31(3), 495-516.

- Hales, R. & Larkin, I. (2018). Successful action in the public sphere: the case of a sustainable tourism-led community protest against coal seam gas mining in Australia, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26:6, 927-941.
- Inbakaran, R. J., & Jackson, M. (2006). Resident Attitudes inside Victoria's Tourism Product Regions: A Cluster Analysis. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, Vol:13(1), 59-74.
- Jurowski, C., Uysal, M., & Williams, D. R. (1997). A Theoretical Analysis of Host Community Resident Reactions to Tourism. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol:36(2), 3-11.
- Kastenholz, E., Carneiro, M. J., Eusébio, C., & Figueiredo, E. (2013). Host-guest relationships in rural tourism: Evidence from two Portuguese villages. *Anatolia*, 24(3), 367–380.
- Lankford, S., & Howard, D. (1994). Developing a Tourism Impact Scale. *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol:21(1), 121-139.
- Mathew, P.V. Sreejesh, S.(2017). Impact of responsible tourism on destination sustainability and quality of life of community in tourism destinations. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* Vol: 31 7), 83-89.
- McGehee, N. G., & Andereck, K. L. (2004). Factors predicting rural residents' support of tourism. *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol:43, 131–140.
- Özel, C. H. & Kozak, N. (2017). An exploratory study of resident perceptions toward the tourism industry in Cappadocia: a Social Exchange Theory approach, *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 22:3, 284-300.
- Park, DB, Nunkoo, R, & Yoon, YS, 2015. Rural residents' attitudes to tourism and the moderating. effects of social capital. *Tourism Geographies* 17(1), 112–13..
- Puhakka, R., Sarkki, S., Cottrell, S., & Siikamäki, P. (2009). Local discourses and international initiatives: Sociocultural sustainability of tourism in Oulanka National Park, Finland. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 17(5), 529–549.
- Rasoolimanesh, S. M., Jaafar, M., Kock, N., & Ramayah, T. (2015). A revised framework of social exchange theory to investigate the factors influencing residents' perceptions. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 16, 335–345.
- Sharpley, R. (2014). Host perceptions of tourism: A review of the research, *Tourism Management*, 42: 37-49.
- Vargas-Sánchez, A., Oom do Valle, P., Mendes, J. C., & Silva, J. A. (2015). Residents' attitude and level of destination development: An international comparison. *Tourism Management*, 48, 199–210.
- Wang, S., & Chen, J. (2015). The influence of place identity on perceived tourism impacts. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 52, 16–28.