

A Case Study on the Impact of Personal Characteristics on Residents' Support for Tourism Development

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Introduction

Tourism is an economic phenomenon that has economic, social, cultural, and personal impacts on the communities that host it. Tourism imposes either positive or negative externalities on the host community - once a community becomes a tourist destination, the lives of residents in that community become affected by those activities (Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013). In turn, the residents' attitude toward tourism development will affect its development, since the hospitality of residents will affect tourists' experience greatly.

Earlier studies on the interaction between hosts and guests focus on economic, social, cultural and environmental factors (Getz, 1986; Brunt & Courtney, 1999; Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002; Liu, Sheldon, & Var, 1987; Walpole & Goodwin, 2000). A majority of scholars realize that the development of tourism relies heavily on good will of the residents (Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002). Whether the residents support the development or not will be influenced by their perception of the impacts. Therefore, understanding residents' perceived impacts is as important as the actual impact (McGehee & Andereck, 2004).

More recently the literature on residents' attitude began to examine the measurement of residents' attitude to tourism, the factors influencing residents' perceived impacts and the determinants of residents' support for tourism development. Some variables identified include sociodemographic characteristics, proximity to tourism districts, attachment to the community or length of residence, economic/employment dependency on tourism, political or demographic position in society (Sharpley, 2014; Brida, Chiappa, Meleddu, & Pulina, 2014; Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Harrill & Potts, 2003; Liu, Sheldon, & Var, 1987).

A number of models were also developed to theorize the relationship between tourism development and residents' perceptions of impacts, for instance, Irridex model (Doxey, 1976), tourist area life cycle (Butler, 1980), social exchange theory (Ap, 1992), growth machine theory, and community attachment (Harrill & Potts, 2003). However, no agreements have been reached on the evaluation of strength and direction of the determinants of the residents' attitude to tourism. Furthermore, the majority of the previous empirical research focus on the rural area, studies in the urban area is lacking.

The purpose of this research is to assess resident attitudes towards tourism including those areas that residents believe are impacting their quality of life. Specifically, the goal is to find how personal characteristics (distance from tourism zone, length of residence in Charleston, and working in tourism sector or not) mediate the residents' attitudes to tourism from perceived impact. Are there any relationships between these factors and support to tourism?

Based on the works of earlier research and social exchange theory, this research proposes a series of hypotheses and a two-stage structural model (Figure 1) which examines the relationships among personal characteristics, the perceived positive/negative impact, and subsequent support for tourism development (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). Social exchange theory (Turner 1974) posits that the exchange of economic and social resources forms the basis of all human interactions (Abdollahzadeh and Sharifzadeh 2014). In the case of tourism, residents will demonstrate more willingness to enter into exchanges with tourists if they receive more benefits than costs. This principle explains why so often residents who perceive that they will benefit from tourism are more

supportive of tourism development and have more positive reactions to tourists (Jurowski, Uysal and Williams 1997, Long, et al. 1990).

A Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

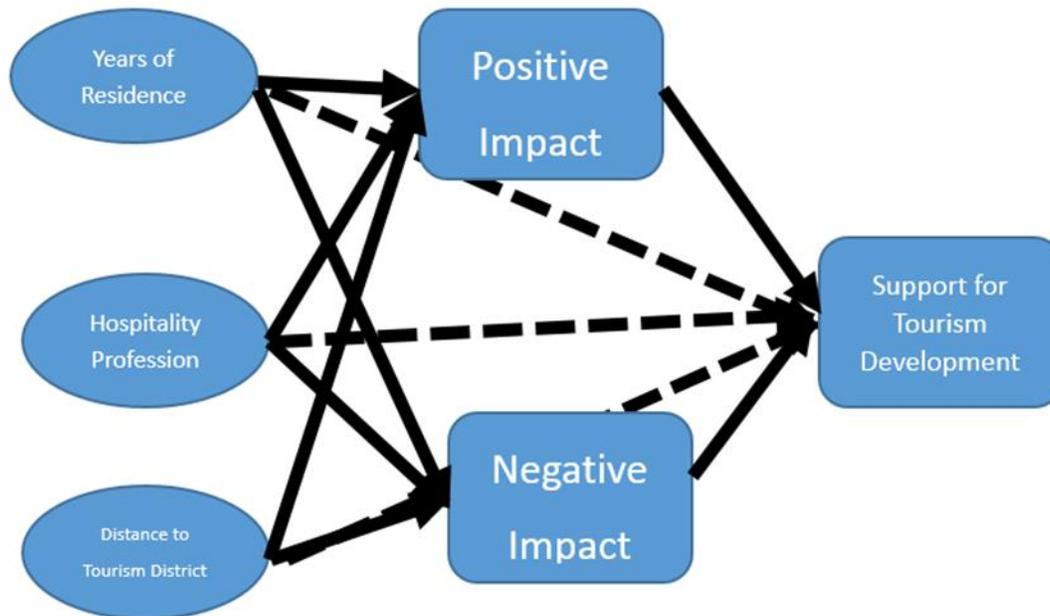


Figure 1. A Conceptual Model of Residents' Support for Tourism Development

Figure 1 describes the conceptual model of this study.

According to social exchange theory, if the residents in destination communities' perceive positive impacts of tourism exceeds the negative impacts, the residents will support the development of tourism. Thus:

Hypothesis 1: A direct positive relationship exists between the perceived positive impact of tourism and local residents' support for tourism.

Hypothesis 2: An inverse relationship exists between the perceived negative impact of tourism and local residents' support for tourism.

Length of residency has been found to have an ambiguous and sometimes contradictory influence on perceptions of tourism. Long, Perdue, and Allen (1990) studied the perceptions and attitudes of residents toward the impacts of tourism and the relationship between these perceptions and resident support for additional tourism development. The results of the survey showed that tourism impact perceptions are unrelated to resident characteristics, such as length of residence in the area, age, and education. Harrill (2004) quoted the finding of Vesey and Dimanche (2000) in a study of New

Orleans's French Quarter, which demonstrate that length of residency was positively related to perceptions toward tourism. In contrast, Harrill and Potts (2003) found that in a study of Charleston's historic district, residents had negative attitudes toward tourism development. Generally, tourism researchers have approached the relationships between length of residency and attitudes toward tourism from a negative perspective. Thus:

Hypothesis 3a: A direct negative relationship exist between the years of living in Charleston and perceived positive impact of tourism.

Hypothesis 3b: A positive relationship exist between the years of living in Charleston and perceived negative impact of tourism.

Hypothesis 3c: A negative relationship exist between the years of living in Charleston and support for tourism development.

Sharpley (2014) reviewed earlier studies and found a profession in the tourism sector or dependence on tourism as a source of income is related to positive attitudes towards tourism development. However, a variety of variables (e.g. level of wages in tourism) may temper these attitudes. Thus:

Hypothesis 4a: A direct positive relationship exist between tourism profession and perceived positive impact of tourism.

Hypothesis 4b: An inverse relationship exist between tourism profession and perceived negative impact of tourism.

Hypothesis 4c: A direct relationship exist between tourism profession and support for tourism.

Jurowski & Gursoy (2004) found that the distance residents live from the attraction had a significant effect on how the costs and benefits were evaluated. Some researchers found that the greater proximity to the tourism district, the more negative perceptions of tourism are. However, such a relationship has not been consistently found in studies (Raymond & Brown, 2007; Sharma & Dyer, 2009). As such:

Hypothesis 5a: A direct positive relationship exist between living distance to downtown and perceived positive impact of tourism

Hypothesis 5b: An inverse relationship exist between living distance to downtown and perceived negative impact of tourism

Hypothesis 5c: A direct positive relationship exist between living distance to downtown and support for tourism.

Research Design

The approach extends previous research that guided the 1994 City of Charleston's Tourism Management Plan. Its significance rests on the fact that Charleston's tourism is dependent not only on the natural, cultural, and culinary resources, but also on the public's goodwill. This goodwill of residents towards tourists is an essential piece of the Charleston visitor's experience as represented by the friendliness of residents and the beauty and charm of the residential neighborhoods being consistently identified in visitor surveys to be what visitors enjoy most about visiting. Thereby, an open dialog and cooperation with residents is needed to identify and mitigate potential conflicts between residents and tourism interests.

To achieve this end, a draft four page questionnaire was developed by the Office of Tourism Analysis, drawing from the literature and previous research. The draft questionnaire was subsequently vetted and approved by the Department of Planning, Preservation and Sustainability with input from the Tourism Management Advisory Committee, composed of representatives of neighborhood associations, preservation groups, and tourism leaders.

Measurement of constructs

Table 1 is the list of items used for measure the constructs.

Table 1. Measurement of constructs

Construct	Measurement
Support for tourism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In general, the positive benefits of tourism outweigh negative impacts. 2. I am proud to live in a place that provides as many tourism/visitor opportunities as Charleston does.
Positive impact of tourism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There are better shopping, dining and cultural opportunities in Charleston because of tourism. 2. Tourism provided the opportunity to put the Charleston area on the map. 3. Tourism generates substantial tax revenues for our local government that benefit residents. 4. Tourism is a strong economic contributor to our community. 5. Tourism benefits other non-tourism sectors in our local economy.
Negative impact of tourism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Congestion due to tourism and special events 2. Availability of parking and public open spaces for residents due to tourism 3. Sanitation 4. Noise 5. Our community is overcrowded because of tourism. 6. Tourism is growing too fast in our communities. 7. Tourists in my community disrupt my quality of life.

Distance to tourism zone, which was measured by distance to downtown Charleston, was categorized into four (from short to long distance):

Group 1 – downtown Charleston: South of Broad Street, French Quarter, Harleston Village, Gadsden Wharf, Ansonborough

Group 2 – outlying neighborhood: Elliottborough/Cannonborough, East Side, Mazyck Wraggborough, Radcliffeborough

Group 3 – northern Charleston: North of the Crosstown

Group 4 – cross-bridge neighborhood: West Ashley, James Island, Daniel Island

Sample

In April 2014, the questionnaire was administered to 2,150 resident households, randomly selected by the contracted mail service. A total of 1,500 households were from the residential zip codes on peninsular Charleston, 500 from West Ashley/James Island, and 150 from Daniel Island. The heavy weighting of the sample towards the historic downtown Charleston insured that the residential neighborhoods that experience the most pressure from tourism activities were highly represented in the results. On April 1, 2014 each selected household received a post card, addressed from the Mayor asking for their participation, followed by a mail questionnaire 5 days later. Those

who did not respond received a replacement questionnaire one week later. The post card and questionnaire can be viewed in the appendix of this report. Each survey had an identification code to insure that no household could submit more than one completed survey. This led to the elimination of approximately 12 questionnaires that were duplicate copies.

Surveys returned by May 6, 2014 were included in the final dataset, providing residents more than four weeks to complete and return the questionnaire. A total of 487 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a 22.7% response rate.

Expected Results

We expect that the perceived positive impact will positively correlate with the support for tourism development in Charleston and it's the opposite for the perceived negative impact. In addition, we expect that the years of Charleston residency will be positively correlated with their perceived negative impact of tourism, and negatively related to their perceived positive impact and the support for tourism. For the hospitality-related profession, we expect the opposite. For the residents' distance to the tourism district, we expect that as they live further away from the tourist district, the residents are more likely to perceive more positive impact, less negative impact, and more likely to support tourism development.

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