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ABSTRACT

Anahita Khazaei PhD Candidate
School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, University of Guelph

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Anahita Khazaei, PhD Candidate
School of Hospitality and Tourism Management
University of Guelph

Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to understand and describe why immigrants are relatively less engaged in tourism planning initiatives and how their engagement can be improved. To this end, it will focus on the engagement of immigrants, as a subgroup of the broader host community, in tourism planning. We will draw from literatures on stakeholder theory, public policy, sustainable development, urban planning, sustainable tourism, tourism planning and community based tourism. First the evolution of stakeholder theory in different fields and its impact on the tourism literature will be presented. Next, the notion of sustainability and the importance of community participation in achieving sustainable development goals will be discussed. Then, the role of immigrants, as fringe stakeholders, in the future success of tourism planning will be explained. A research program for addressing issues related to immigrants' engagement in tourism planning, and also a discussion of the philosophical assumptions underlying the research and the proposed methodology, will be presented. Finally, practical and theoretical implications of the research will be discussed.

Literature review

Community members are considered as one of the most important tourism stakeholder groups. Bornhorst, Ritchie and Sheehan (2010) mention "community support" as one of the three determinants of tourism success for both destinations and Destination Management Organizations (referred to as DMOs here after). Therefore, building collaborative relationships between planners and local communities (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005) and establishing "bottom-up decision making processes" (Wu, 2008, p.52) is becoming more and more important. In order to better understand relationships between various stakeholders (including community members); their attitudes toward tourism and finding effective ways for engaging them in tourism planning, a wide range of theories from different disciplines, ranging from urban planning theories (Ruiz-Ballesteros, 2011) to theories on inter-organizational relationships (Lew, 2007) and organizational behaviour (Beritelli, Bieger & Laesser, 2007; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005; Timur & Getz, 2008) have been brought to the tourism field. These studies have greatly contributed to the tourism literature but some areas have received relatively less attention. Among these, is the fact that the community is not a homogeneous group (Okazaki, 2008) and not all community subgroups have equal opportunities to participate in tourism planning. A review of the literature on community engagement reveals evidence of advancements in participation of core community groups. However, the fringe has received less attention.

Molotch (1976) explains that the residents' community is made up of smaller communities. Madrigal (1995) groups residents into three segments. The largest group is named "realists", followed by "haters" and "lovers". Based on his research, only lovers and haters are motivated enough to strongly agree or disagree with tourism development plans while the majority of residents who have a more balanced and realistic understanding of the positive and negative

effects of tourism usually do not express their attitudes (p. 94). On the other hand, in many cases only those community groups that support development plans are involved in the process and other groups that are more critical are ignored (Joppe, 1996). Harrill (2004) also highlights the need to engage "attached and unattached" and "long term" as well as "short term" residents in tourism planning (p. 264). Therefore, in order to move toward "full community participation" as one of the main components of sustainable tourism (Choi & Murray, 2010, p. 575), there is a need to focus more on finding ways to involve all segments of community members.

Immigrants can be considered as examples of less engaged community members. In a more general context, Baer (2005) mentions the importance of studying immigrants' engagement in voluntary activities, as an "under-investigated area" (p.4). Many of the terms that Hart and Sharma (2004) use for describing fringe stakeholders (e.g., poor, week, disinterested, isolated or illiterate), can be applied to immigrants with slightly different interpretations. They may be educated but still lack sufficient levels of knowledge and information about their new country, especially in terms of tourism; not be familiar with the culture and geography; lack language skills; not yet be part of the active social groups or even not be interested in the tourism related issues. They may not have a strong feeling of belonging to the new society or perceive themselves as guests instead of hosts. Previous research indicates that many immigrant groups, especially those that do not speak English at home, have lower levels of civic engagement compared to native Canadians (Baer, 2008). However, as mentioned by Reed, Graves, Dandy, Posthumus, Hubacek and Morris (2009) stakeholders' level of interest or power may increase over time. Today's newcomers will form the future host community and will influence the tourism industry in different ways: as residents who are part of the place identity and engaged in the co-creation of experiences with tourists (Saraniemi & Kylänen, 2011) or as employees and owners of the different tourism related businesses. Byrd (2007) emphasizes the importance of engaging the future host community in tourism planning. As there is not "a definable, single, generic interest for the future host community", incorporating their interests in tourism planning is very challenging for planners (p. 11). This issue is even more important for countries and cities that are open to new residents, who are from different cultures and may have different attitudes and perception about the place, and also about tourism.

Proposed research methods

Our intended research program includes two phases. The first phase is focused on the current role and situation of immigrants in tourism planning and factors that may have led to their marginalization or may enhance their engagement. Answering these questions will result in a framework for approaching immigrants as tourism stakeholders, which indicates different aspects that planners should consider for successfully engaging them in the planning process. The second phase is concerned with the process of engaging immigrants in planning and will lead to a framework for implementing an effective engagement process. Conducting the first phase of the research program provides the fundamental knowledge, which is required before starting the second phase. This research will be focused on the first phase, and more specifically, on the following questions:

- How do research participants perceive the current role of immigrants in tourism planning?
- What barriers are hindering/ can enhance immigrants' engagement in tourism planning?

Canada, with a growing population of immigrants and Toronto as one of the main Canadian cities chosen by immigrants, can be considered as a good context for conducting this study. Based on 2006 Census data, people born outside Canada account for 19.8% (almost one fifth) of the total population. Toronto hosted 30 per cent of all recent immigrants and 20 per cent of all immigrants in Canada[1].

This study will be conducted using qualitative methods, which have been increasingly adopted by researchers in tourism research in recent years (Pernecky & Jamal, 2010). Qualitative methods have been considered as appropriate specifically for studies of host communities' perceptions about tourism and its impact on their lives (Walle, 1997), and have been recommended for future studies in the field (Ballantyne, Packer & Axelsen, 2009). Data will be gathered through individual in-depth interviews with planners and immigrants. Planners are managers and experts of public, private and non-governmental organizations directly involved in tourism planning. Research shows that newcomers, immigrants living in Canada for 5 years or less, are more concerned with more urgent issues (e.g. finding a place to live, providing appropriate education to their children and finding a job) and less interested in issues like social participation (Caidi & Allard, 2005). Therefore, immigrant research participants will be selected among first generation immigrants who have been living in Canada for more than five years, and are living in Toronto.

Expected outcomes

Engaging immigrants in tourism planning is important from both instrumental and normative perspectives. From the instrumental point of view, the engagement of immigrants is critical for planners to acquire accurate knowledge about the future host community and to be proactive and innovative in their planning. From the normative point of view, in a democratic society, all attempts should be made to engage all stakeholders in the decision making process and ensure that less powerful groups have not been "marginalised" (Reed *et al*., 2009, p.2420). Because education and empowerment are main elements of community engagement, it will also facilitate immigrants' transition to their new life and will help them to become active members of the society by becoming more knowledgeable about different aspects of their new country.

Answering the research questions presented here will contribute to the existing literature in three ways: first, by bringing attention to immigrants as an important but less studied tourism stakeholder group; second, by emphasizing the importance of considering ongoing changes of the host community as a key factor in tourism planning, with immigrants accounting for a major proportion of this change; and third, by empirically researching the host community as a heterogeneous group.

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[1] http://www.toronto.ca/toronto_facts/diversity.htm

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