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Resident Attitude towards Tourism – The State of Knowledge

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ABSTRACT

As residents' attitudes toward tourism are influenced by how tourism is perceived to impact their communities both positively and negatively, the study of resident attitudes toward tourism has been an important area of research in the field for a number of years. After nearly 30 years of research, many insights can now be gained about resident attitudes toward, and subsequent support for, tourism. This paper presents an overview of the current state of research, frames it for the managerial perspective and makes suggestions for where the research should move from this point.

Keywords: *resident attitudes, theoretical framework, support for tourism development*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism development as a means to improve economic conditions has been a typical strategy used in communities and the benefits and costs of tourism have been presented in multiple studies (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990). Because residents' attitudes toward tourism are influenced by how tourism is perceived to impact their communities both positively and negatively, the study of resident attitudes toward tourism has been an important area of research in the field for a number of years. In earlier studies, research questions tended to be descriptive in nature simply measuring residents' perceptions of tourism impacts (Akis, Peristianis & Warner, 1996; Ross, 1992). Later, studies investigated variables which had promise in predicting attitudes toward tourism to varying degrees of success (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Wang & Pfister, 2008). Research evolved in later studies to include both new variables (Woosnam, 2011a) and research questions involving variables which had potential to predict resident support for tourism development in communities (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf & Vogt, 2005; Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Nicholas, Thapa & Ko, 2009).

At the core of the study of resident attitudes toward tourism are the managerial implications for communities. Resident support is essential for tourism to thrive in a community. After nearly 30 years of research, many insights can now be gained about resident attitudes toward, and subsequent support for, tourism. This paper presents an overview of the current state of research, frames it for the managerial perspective, and makes suggestions for where the research should move from this point.

Theories

A variety of theories have been applied to explore residents' perceptions towards tourism development, such as social exchange theory (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Látková & Vogt, 2011; Madrigal, 1993; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Wang & Pfister, 2008), social impacts (Belisle & Hoy, 1980; King, Pizam, & Milman, 1993; Korca, 1998; Milman & Pizam, 1988; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990), place/community attachment (Cui & Ryan, 2011; Vargas-Sánchez, Plaza-Mejía, & Porras-Bueno, 2009), reasoned action theory (Kwan & McCartney, 2005), tourism area life cycle theory (Látková & Vogt, 2011; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2009), value-attitude models (Lindberg & Johnson, 1997), the 'Irridex' model (Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2009), stakeholder theory (Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009), and emotional solidarity theory (Woosnam, 2011a; Woosnam, 2011b). Among these theories, social exchange theory and social impact theory are most frequently used. These theories have been used to frame studies using a variety of variables. The following sections review the causal relationships that have been tested between socio-demographic and other variables, attitude towards, and support for tourism development in previous research

Predicting Attitudes toward Tourism

Attitudes and Socio-Demographic Variables. Demographic variables have been utilized in studies of resident attitudes toward tourism as explanatory variables. Patterns in the results concerning demographic variables are not apparent and more typically discrepancies or no relationships are found. When considering *gender*, multiple studies found no relationship between gender and attitudes toward tourism including residents' perceptions towards economic, environmental and social impacts (Cui & Ryan, 2011; Madrigal, 1993; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Perdue et al., 1990). Similar to gender, *age* was usually found to have no relationship to perceptions of attitudes with a few exceptions including the studies by McGehee and Andereck (2004), Weaver and Lawton (2001), and Kuvan and Akan (2005). *Level of education* yielded multiple results across several studies, indicating an unclear pattern. In several of the studies under consideration, level of education was found to have no relationship to resident attitudes toward tourism (Hao, Long, & Kleckley, 2010; Korca, 1998; Madrigal, 1993; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Perdue et al., 1990). Contrary to these studies, Kuvan and Akan (2005), Perdue et al. (1990), and Látková and Vogt (2011), found it to be a significant predictor of residents' attitudes toward tourism. When testing *income*, most studies found no relationship (Hao et al., 2010; Korca, 1998; Látková & Vogt, 2011; McGehee & Andereck, 2004), but again other studies found varying results, including the work of Williams and Lawson (2001), and Kuvan and Akan (2005). *Length of residency* is another socio-demographic variable used in predicting attitudes. Like many of the other variables, it was found to have no relationship to attitudes toward tourism in several studies (McGehee & Andereck 2004; Perdue, Long & Allen 1990), yet, Hao, Long and Kleckley (2010) found a positive association whereas Weaver and Lawton (2001) found negative

relationships. In studies which included resident contact with tourists, no consistent results were found again (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Korca, 1998). Resident's history with the community whether by *birth* or *living there as a child* was also a variable used to predict attitudes toward tourism with no clear pattern emerging (Madrigal, 1993; McGehee & Andereck, 2004).

Attitudes and Other Variables. A variety of additional variables have been used to attempt to predict resident attitudes toward tourism. Most notably, when using *personal benefits from tourism* as an independent variable, a clear pattern was found across different studies (Andereck et al., 2005; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Látková & Vogt, 2011; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Perdue et al., 1990; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2009). As well, the more *income* respondents earned from the tourism industry, the more likely it was that residents would have positive attitudes towards tourism (Andereck et al., 2005; Williams & Lawson, 2001). Attitudes residents have towards an *increased number of tourists* has been found to have various results on community members' perceptions of impacts on quality of life issues. In one study relationships between *quality of life* and general attitudes toward tourism were found (Hao et al., 2010).

Predicting Support for Tourism Development

Support for development and socio-demographic variables. Similar to the study of resident attitudes, neither *gender* nor *age* was found to consistently predict resident support for tourism development. As well, when considering *level of education* and support various results were found (Korca, 1998; Wang & Pfister, 2008). Only one study included here considered length of residency in terms of support for tourism development (Wang & Pfister, 2008). The authors found no relationship between support for tourism development and length of residency when personal benefits of tourism were controlled. However, when considering *distance from the tourist zone* and support for tourism development two studies, Korca (1998) and Jurowski and Gursoy (2004) found relationships between the two variables.

Support for development, perceived impacts, and other variables. *Perceived positive impacts* of tourism have proven to be effective in predicting support for tourism across various studies (McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Perdue et al., 1990). Regarding *quality of life*, positive relationships were found in several studies (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Korca, 1998). When considering *personal benefits*, a clear positive pattern was found (McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Perdue et al., 1990; Wang & Pfister, 2008). For *economic impact*, there is no clear pattern and both positive and negative relationships were found (Korca, 1998). Perceptions towards tourism's *cultural and social impacts* were found to influence people's support for tourism development differently. While cultural-educational impacts were positively related to support for tourism development, social values was not a valid predictor (Korca, 1998). Aside from focusing on the current situation, perception towards the effect of tourism on *community development* was also found to be related to support for tourism (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Korca, 1998).

The relationships between support for tourism development and other variables have also been investigated. It was found that *emotional solidarity* was positively associated with the variable support for tourism development, yet some sub-dimensions were not significant (Woosnam, 2011). The relationship between *community perception* and support for tourism

development has been studied in the aspects of *community attachment* and *the future of community*. While the former was found to have a positive association (Nicholas et al., 2009), a negative relationship was found between the variables by Perdue et al. (1990).

CONCLUSION

From the extensive review of causal relationships in the area of resident attitudes toward tourism, we can see that social-demographic variables do not present a clear pattern in predicting either attitudes towards or support for tourism. The theories of social exchange and social impact tend to work only partially in that while positive impacts (benefits) have been found to be a valid predictor of attitude and support, negative impacts (costs) do not influence the dependent variable as the theories demonstrate. Other theories or constructs, such as place attachment, tourism area life cycle, and emotional solidarity, have been applied to generate only a small number of predictors and thus a comprehensive view is lacking. Therefore, current research is still in the process of developing a theory, which can encompass all the disparate variables. A few managerial implications have been proposed based on the causal relationships that we summarized above, such as enhancing citizen involvement, minimizing impacts and incorporating residents' emotional solidarity with visitors (Andereck et al., 2005; Korca, 1998; Woosnam, 2011). If managers understand how residents perceive the impacts of tourism, it follows that tourism development in a community can be planned in a way that improves the overall quality of life for residents. Future research includes the needs for longitudinal and comparative analysis, qualitative analysis, and measurement improvement (Amuquandoh, 2009; Andereck et al., 2005; Perdue et al., 1987).

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