

12 Place attachment and residents' perceptions of tourism development in small town destinations

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The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Analyse the relationship between place attachment and tourism impact the way it is perceived by small town destinations residents.
- Deepen the research on place attachment and on tourism impacts.
- Bring insights to small town destinations management and marketing.

Keywords: place attachment, tourism impacts, urban tourism, sustainability.

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Introduction

Towns and cities have always been places where tourism and leisure experiences are constantly produced and consumed and a source of special fascination for visitors and tourists (Hall & Page, 2014). The development of tourism generates different degrees of impact on destination places, environments, and on the local population. Understanding resident perception of those impacts is crucial to the successful and sustainable development of tourism (Šegota, Mihalič & Kuščer, 2017). Residents are the most important destination stakeholders and, because of that, they should participate in the planning of sustainable tourism development in order to control the impacts of tourism on the places where they live (Lawton & Weaver, 2015; Garrod, Fyall, Leask & Reid, 2012). As a consequence, it is important to establish awareness of host communities' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards sustainable tourism development, particularly in locations with a small population base (Thompson-Fawcett & McGregor, 2011).

Once a community becomes a tourist destination, the lives of its residents become affected. Even though most of the studies conducted on tourism impacts focused on economic, social, and environmental wellbeing, the central question is still the need to understand how community residents perceive the impacts of tourism (Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013).

Another crucial concept regarding sustainable tourism development is place attachment, commonly defined as the emotional bond between an individual and a specific place (Manzo, 2003). However, affection, emotions, and feelings are not the only concepts of place attachment. Cognition and practice are important as well (Low & Altman, 1992; Vorkinn & Riese, 2001). People may feel attached to a place because of emotional and social ties, but also because of the physical aspects of the place (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Lewicka, 2011). Places are above all social constructions and include physical, social, and psychological connotations that help build attachment (Knez, 2014).

Crucial to the role of place attachment in place-related studies is the ability to explain perceptions and behaviors in people's interactions with places as a result of affection. And although place attachment is a critical factor shaping residents' attitudes and perceptions toward tourism development, investigation relating those two dimensions, and particularly research focusing on small town destinations, is still scarce (Stylidis, 2018).

When residents develop deeper bonds with their nearby settings, they are more willing to be involved in the development of their regions, thus,

more sensible to the effects of tourism. Within this context, this paper aims to analyze the relationship between place attachment and tourism impacts perceived by the residents of small town destinations, considering that there might be a positive relationship between residents' level of place attachment and their perceptions of the impacts that tourism may have on that place.

Literature review

Residents' perceptions of tourism impacts

Tourism influences residents' values, behaviors, lifestyles, and quality of life (Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh & Ismail, 2017; Rasoolimanesh, Badarulzaman, Abdulah & Behrang 2019; Gannon, Rasoolimanesh & Taheri, 2020) and affects positively and negatively their daily life. The quality of tourism experiences depends largely on the residents' quality of life. Therefore, "understanding resident perceptions and responses is fundamental to the successful and sustainable development of tourism" (Sharpley, 2014).

In general, tourism impacts are categorized positively and negatively (Jaafar, Noor, & Rasoolimanesh, 2015) into economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Caneday & Zeiger, 1991; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; George, 2010). Recent studies on tourism impacts emphasize the way those effects are perceived by residents. There are several studies in tourism literature that focus on how tourism impacts are perceived by residents (e.g. Wang & Pfister, 2008; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Kim, Uysal & Sirgy, 2013; Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Kock & Ramayah 2015; Rasoolimanesh, Ali & Jafaar, 2018).

In terms of socio-cultural effects, tourism can preserve the local cultural identity, enhance local culture and residents' pride (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2018), increase recreation activities and opportunities for residents (Gannon et al., 2020), and improve quality of life (Almeida-García, Peláez-Fernández, Balbuena-Vázquez & Cortés-Macias, 2016). But tourism development can also disrupt the normal routines of local residents (Lundberg, 2017) causing negative impacts on local communities such as overcrowding, traffic congestion, higher prices (Monterrubio, 2016), and crime (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017, 2018).

As far as economic impacts are concerned, tourism creates more and new jobs for residents (Almeida-García et al., 2016; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017, 2018), attract more investment (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2018; Gannon et al., 2020), increases the residents' standard of living (Gannon et al., 2020; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2017, 2018), and provides higher income and