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Research paper

## Demographic analysis of residents' support for tourism development in Jamaica

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the demographic profile of residents in relation to their support for tourism development in Jamaica. Utilizing data collected from residents across the 14 parishes of Jamaica, a cross-tabulation analysis is used to identify the specific descriptive profile of residents who support tourism development. The variables assessed in this study include residents' biological sex-type, age, monthly income, education level, ethnicity, and area and length of residency. Identity theory is used as theoretical framework for this study because it assumes that an individual's identity influences his or her behavior and attitude. The result shows that female residents support tourism development more than males. Another finding is that residents who support tourism development tend to be between the ages of 18 and 25 and are of black ethnicity. Overall, residents who support tourism development in Jamaica tend to reside in the parish of Portland. This study can assist tourism planners in their strategic and operational decisions for tourism development.

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## 1. Introduction

Residents' attitudes towards tourism is extremely important as they are the ones directly impacted by its development (Easterling, 2004). They are also important stakeholders and therefore, without their support, tourism development will not be sustainable (Byrd, 2007). Furthermore, a resident's level of support is likely to decrease as their perceptions of the negative impacts of tourism increase (Sinclair-Maragh & Gursoy, 2015a). Based on these notions, it is important to assess the demographic profile of residents to determine their attitude towards tourism, particularly their support for its development. As noted by Sharma and Dyer (2009), a resident's demographic profile includes variables such as gender, age, education, income, ethnicity and occupation.

Although the literature suggests that these variables have been commonly used to determine residents' attitudes toward tourism development (Hao, Long & Klecky, 2011), few studies have made them the predominant focus of their investigation. Moreover, some of these scholars (e.g. Mason & Cheyne, 2000) examine these variables in terms of their general associations with tourism development rather than identifying the specific demographic profile of residents who will support tourism development.

This research seeks to examine the demographic profile of residents in relation to their support for tourism development. It is

important to derive the specificity of the residents' profile because, according to Gursoy, Chi and Dyer (2010), their individualistic nature makes it challenging for tourism planners to design a development plan that will satisfy everyone. For instance, the literature indicates that male, college-educated, urban residents who earned more than \$25,000 annually tend to be more supportive of tourism development (Iroegbu & Chen, 2001). Men and women also have different attitudes toward tourism development because of disparities in their occupations and wages (Harrill & Potts, 2003). Hence, specific information regarding the demographic profile of residents who support tourism will enable better planning for the industry and a destination on a whole.

There is the need to examine demographic variables of destinations so as to get a better understanding of residents' perceptions of tourism development (Sinclair-Maragh, Gursoy & Vier-egge, 2015). Jamaica is selected as the study site as it is important to conduct such research in this developing country. The tourism industry, which emerged over two centuries ago (Taylor, 1993) has been and continues to be a major economic industry for this country. Sinclair-Maragh and Gursoy (2015b) note that developing countries continue to welcome the prospects of tourism development due to the benefits to be derived especially economic growth and development. Therefore, being an active tourism destination, it is imperative to examine the demographic profiles of residents to establish their support for any future development. In this study, residents' support for tourism is based on their attitude towards its development. The government and destination

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planners need to understand residents' views of and attitudes toward tourism development, especially since they are the ones who work directly and indirectly in the industry, and who live and work in the designated resort areas. This objective forms one of the main theoretical contributions of the study. Additionally, an examination of the literature shows that although similar studies have been done in Jamaica, these are not current and so more studies are needed to provide updated information regarding residents' support for tourism development.

Identity theory is used as the theoretical framework for this study as it posits that an individual's identity influences their action and behavior within a social structure (Stets & Bigga, 2003). This theory explains why residents across the different demographic variables support tourism development. It is also fitting for this study as extant literature uses identity theory to explain residents' attitude and behavior towards tourism development (e.g. Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012).

The purpose of the study is therefore to examine the demographic profile of residents in relation to their support for tourism development. Cross-tabulation analysis is used to achieve this. Each of the socio-demographic variables is examined in relation to residents' support for tourism development. This research serves to advance studies in Jamaica and the Caribbean region and to further the literature on residents' support for tourism development. Based on the findings, implications for the government and tourism planners are discussed and areas of research are suggested for future studies.

## 2. Literature review

This section of the paper presents a review of literature pertaining to each of the socio-demographic variables identified for the study. These variables are residents' biological sex-type, age, income, education, ethnicity, and length of residence. They are explained within the context of residents' support for tourism development. Supporting literature is used to substantiate the assumptions being proposed for the relationship between each demographic variable and residents' support for tourism development as presented below.

### 2.1. Residents' biological sex-type and their support for tourism development

There is mixed evidence regarding the differences between males and females and their attitudes toward tourism development (Harvey, Hunt & Harris, 1995). While Harvey et al. (1995) report that there is lack of statistical difference between men and women pertaining to tourism development, Mason and Cheyne (2000) find that females in comparison to males are more opposed to its development. Females are said to be more in opposition to tourism development than their counterparts due to its perceived negative impacts including increased traffic, noise and crime (Mason & Cheyne, 2000). Despite this difference, however, females also acknowledge the positive spinoffs of tourism development, such as the desired economic benefits and tourism facilities in the community (Mason & Cheyne, 2000). Harrill and Potts's (2003) finding in their study of Charleston, South Carolina, was that biological sex-type is a significant predictor of how the economic benefits of tourism are perceived, with females being more concerned about the economic benefits of tourism than males.

It is claimed that the differences in perceptions and attitudes of male and female toward tourism development is based on biological dissimilarities pertaining to the brain and hormone. This results in differences in moods, personalities, expressive abilities, spatial abilities, visual orientation, and communication (Kim,

Lehto & Morrison, 2007; Putrevu, 2001). Another discourse is that maleness-associated traits are manifested by being agentic and controlling while the female traits are demonstrated through being nurturing and sensitive (Fischer & Arnold, 1994). Females will, therefore, be pro-tourism development for the purpose of economic gains to take care of their family (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). Based on the above mentioned discourse, it is therefore being proposed that:

**H1.** Females are more supportive of tourism development than males.

### 2.2. Residents' age and their support for tourism development

The age of residents can influence their attitudes toward tourism development (Harrill, 2004). On one hand, the literature shows that the older the residents, the more negative their perceptions toward tourism development (Cavus & Tanrisevdi, 2002). On the other hand, it is believed that older residents tend to have positive attitudes toward tourism development than younger ones (Deng, Arbogast & Selin, 2011; Tomljenovic & Faulkner, 2000). They are more community-public-service oriented (Sinclair-Maragh et al., 2015), as they believe that social and public-service amenities are very important to their lives. Another discourse is that they have little concern about environmental issues (Tomljenovic & Faulkner, 2000), so they are more highly in agreement with tourism development. One other reason is that the opportunities to benefit from tourism increase with age and so they have better prospects for management positions within the tourism industry because of their experience (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). They also have the opportunity to obtain capital to venture into self-employment in tourism-related business (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). Hence, based on the above discourse, the following is being proposed:

**H2.** Older residents are more supportive of tourism development than younger residents.

### 2.3. Residents' income and their support for tourism development

Tourism development provides opportunities for direct and indirect employment, and thus income generation (Saarinen, 2003). These businesses create markets for local producers (Torres & Momsen, 2004) and enable the multiplier effect in an economy (Sinclair, 1998). Notwithstanding the economic empowerment of tourism through income generation, inequity in the distribution of financial resources is a concern. It is perceived that the use of expatriate labor results in wage disparity for local residents (Mbaiwa, 2003). This could cause some resentment to tourism development. Although Hao et al. (2011) report that income is not associated with residents' attitude towards tourism development, the literature generally shows that residents who are wealthier tend to have positive attitudes toward tourism development (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996). It is therefore being proposed that:

**H3.** Residents with more income are more supportive of tourism development.

### 2.4. Residents' education and their support for tourism development

One's level of education can influence their ability to communicate any concerns they have regarding tourism development. Findings show that persons who have obtained high-school education are better able to articulate these concerns (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Sinclair-Maragh et al., 2015). The literature also notes that residents who are more educated tend to have positive attitudes toward tourism development (Teye, Sonmez & Sirakaya,

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