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Research paper

The importance of tourism impacts for different local resident groups: A case study of a Swedish seaside destination

Erik Lundberg

School of Business, Economics and Law at University of Gothenburg, Sweden, PO Box 610, 405 30 Gothenburg, Sweden

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this paper are to explore the ways an importance measure can contribute to resident attitude research and to describe and analyze the results among different local resident groups. Traditional measures on resident attitudes fail to include this evaluative component, which limits the scope of our understanding of resident attitudes. A stakeholder perspective is applied to illustrate how permanent residents and second home owners rate the importance of different tourism impact items, including economic, sociocultural and environmental impacts. Combined with traditional measures of residents' attitudes, this approach can help improve management of tourism destinations. The importance measure is validated using tests of convergent and discriminant validity and a confirmatory factor analysis. The importance measure testing, which was conducted in a Swedish seaside resort destination, reproduces attitudinal differences between permanent residents and second home owners that were found in earlier studies. However, it also highlights the moderating effect of residents' local involvement, which alters the relationship between type of residency and importance of tourism impact items. The conclusion is that, rather than residency type, local involvement has a greater significance when discussing the attitudes of different resident groups.

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1. Introduction

Local residents are key stakeholders in the process of achieving sustainable development in tourism (Eligh, Welford & Ytterhus, 2002). A main focus in tourism impact research has been to study their perceptions of tourism impacts, measuring these perceptions in relation to how the impacts affect either their community, their quality of life (QOL), and/or their support for future tourism development (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Ap & Crompton, 1998; Deery, Jago, & Fredline, 2012; Easterling, 2005; Ko & Stewart, 2002). The underlying assumption is that tourism development has consequences for local residents' well-being (Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013), and the support of those residents is vital for the tourism industry, as it makes up a major part of the tourist experience (Ap, 1992).

Measurement scales have been developed to understand local residents' perception of tourism impacts, i.e. their attitudes towards tourism (see Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Schlenker, Foley, & Getz, 2010). They are, however, often limited in the sense that they include only the level of agreement, i.e. whether an impact is or is not perceived by the community and to what degree; and there is no evaluative component. This

method omits the notion that 'similar impacts may be ascribed different meanings or degrees of importance (salience) by different individuals in the community' (Wall & Mathieson, 2006, p. 55). Inclusion of this evaluative component refines the theoretical understanding of local residents' attitudes towards tourism (Ap & Crompton, 1998). It creates the possibility of understanding whether impacts occur, and whether impacts are important to local residents in terms of tourism development (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Ap & Crompton, 1998; Wall & Mathieson, 2006). From a sustainable development perspective (i.e. economic, sociocultural, environmental impacts), the evaluative component also highlights which impact dimensions are more or less important to residents. In addition to theoretical relevance, by the application of an importance measure, the inclusion of an evaluative component would facilitate tourism planning efforts. More precise information about local residents' attitudes would help legitimize the planning process (cf. Jamal & Getz, 1995) and facilitate the adoption of a community-based approach to sustainable development, where benefits and costs to the host population are the starting point in the tourism planning process (cf. Saarinen, 2006).

It is important to note that local residents are a heterogeneous group of people (Ap & Crompton, 1998; Easterling, 2005; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Wall & Mathieson, 2006). The application of stakeholder theory (Easterling, 2005), social exchange theory (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Ap, 1992) and

E-mail address: erik.lundberg@handels.gu.se<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2016.02.002>

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segmentation analysis (Brougham & Butler, 1981; Fredline & Faulkner, 2000) have mainly illustrated this heterogeneity. This study uses a stakeholder perspective to describe and analyze the importance of tourism impacts according to various local resident groups. Stakeholder theory helps identify groups that are clearly defined, such as permanent residents (PRs) or second home owners (SHOs), on the basis of their unique stakes (Easterling, 2005). Hence, these clearly demarcated groups can be involved in the local community's policy-making and tourism planning processes, as proposed, for instance, by Jamal and Getz (1995) and Nunkoo, Smith and Ramkissoon (2013).

The aims of this paper are to explore the ways importance measure can contribute to resident attitude research, as well as describe and analyze the results among different resident stakeholder groups. The application of the importance measure in marketing research, i.e. the evaluative component (see Martilla & James, 1977; Oh, 2001), is discussed and adapted for use in this context. The purpose is to measure what local residents find important concerning tourism development in their community, and to describe and analyze the results for two main resident groups: PRs and SHOs. To understand differences in results, the groups' local involvement in community activities is also used as a moderating variable. The applied measurement scale includes items that represent economic, sociocultural and environmental impacts, covering the main dimensions of sustainable development (cf. Lundberg, 2014).

2. Literature review

The first section of the literature review discusses existing measurement scales of tourism impacts, which include multiple impact dimensions and/or evaluative components, as well as the contributions of the current study to this body of literature. The three ensuing sections review the importance measure as it is applied in marketing research, different resident groups from a stakeholder perspective, and the concept of residents' local involvement. The latter is included to inform the research model, as well as the discussion of the empirical results of this study.

2.1. Measurement scales

Methodologically, it has been common to explore tourism impacts by surveying local residents in different contexts by means of measurement scales. Some of the most frequently applied scales are the Tourism Impact Attitude Scale (Lankford & Howard, 1994) and the Tourism Impact Scale (Ap & Crompton, 1998). Scales have also been specifically developed for sustainable tourism development, such as the Sustainable Tourism Attitude Scale (SUS-TAS) (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Sirakaya-Turk, Ekinci, & Kaya, 2008) or the ENCORE scale, based on triple-bottom-line reporting and set in the event context (Schlenker et al., 2010). Several scales connect resident perceptions of tourism with their support for tourism as the dependent variable, such as the support for additional tourism (see Ko & Stewart, 2002) and the role that tourism should play in the community (see Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011).

Different scales take different approaches to the questions of perception and attitude. Most scales are content with measuring the residents' belief or agreement (Choi & Murray, 2010; Lankford & Howard, 1994; McCool & Martin, 1994; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990). The measurement of beliefs implies that respondents are asked if specific impacts are perceived by local residents. Because respondents are asked whether they agree or disagree with numerous statements about tourism development, this approach has also been called an agreement scale (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). They do not measure how important these impacts are for local

residents and their community (Wall & Mathieson, 2006) or whether residents like or dislike the perceived changes (Ap & Crompton, 1998). Ap and Crompton (1998) argue that this approach creates ambiguity when interpreting the results because it does not incorporate an evaluative component into the study. In contrast, Ap and Crompton (1998) include both residents' beliefs and an evaluative component (like or dislike) in their research. Each item is measured on a Likert scale (1 to 5) for both components, which are then multiplied to create an index. The index is based on Fishbein's (1963) conceptualization of the 'beliefs about an object and the attitude toward that object' (Fishbein, 1963, p. 233).

Several of the above-mentioned scales contain items that cover multiple impact dimensions, in line with the fundamentals of sustainable development; however, they do not explicitly measure residents' attitudes toward tourism from a sustainable development perspective. The scale developed by Choi and Sirakaya (2005) is an exception. It measures 'residents' attitudes toward sustainable tourism development as subjective indicators (SUS-TAS)' (p. 381). To understand local residents' perceptions of sustainable tourism development, the SUS-TAS consists of cognitive and affective items. The result is a mixture of perceived impacts (cognitive items) and perceptions of how tourism should be developed in the future, based on the fundamentals of sustainable tourism development (affective items) (Choi & Sirakaya, 2005; Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2008). The affective items demonstrate the extent to which local residents agree with the fundamentals of managing sustainable tourism development. In other words, residents establish a position on sustainable tourism development (Nicholas, Thapa, & Ko, 2009). The SUS-TAS does not include an evaluate component regarding the cognitive items; this can also be said of the ENCORE scale (Schlenker et al., 2010). The latter scale focuses on cognitively phrased sociocultural impacts, with few items relating to economic and environmental impacts.

A more recent development in tourism impact research has been to link residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism to their QOL (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Kim et al., 2013; Andereck, Valentine, Vogt & Knopf, 2007; Andereck et al., 2005). According to Andereck and Nyaupane (2011), this link has only been implicit in much of the traditional research on resident attitudes. The difference lies in the dependent variable. Traditionally, this link has been concerned with the way tourism impacts are perceived as influencing the community and the residents' physical environment, and their consequent support for tourism (see Ko & Stewart, 2002). QOL studies, however, are concerned with how impacts influence individuals' or families' life satisfaction (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). Thus, the unit of analysis differs between community level and individual/family level.

Andereck and Nyaupane (2011) have also included an evaluative component similar to the Ap and Crompton's (1998) index. They include an importance component, what they call 'measures of personal value', combined with a measure of satisfaction that relates to 38 QOL items. This forms a QOL index. In addition, they ask respondents to what degree tourism affects their personal quality of life, using the same 38 items. Combining the latter measurement with the QOL index, they produce a Tourism and Quality of Life (TQOL) score, which is a measure of how tourism affects people's quality of life (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). This is a well-developed model that connects tourism impacts to the QOL concept. However, the importance measure is used to understand aspects of life satisfaction, and does so only implicitly in terms of tourism impacts. The present study explicitly measures what local residents find important concerning tourism development in their community, including items from multiple impact dimensions. In combination with the traditional measurement of residents' agreement or beliefs, resident attitudes are explored in more detail

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