

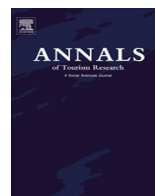


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Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Annals of Tourism Research

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/atoures](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/atoures)



# Imperialism and tourism: The case of developing island countries



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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 11 June 2014

Revised 26 November 2014

Accepted 2 December 2014

**Coordinating Editor: J. Tribe**

#### Keywords:

Economic imperialism

Political imperialism

Cultural imperialism

Foreign investments

Developing countries

Tourism development

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions residents of developing island countries have of imperialism and tourism; and consequently their support for its development. Data collected in Jamaica, a tourist-dependent and developing island country in the Caribbean were analyzed using a series of multiple regression analyses. The result shows that both the positive and negative impacts of tourism influence residents' support. Also, cultural imperialism influences residents' perceptions of the positive and negative impacts and economic imperialism influences their perceptions of the positive impacts only. One major theoretical contribution is that imperialism is examined in relation to foreign tourism investments in a developing island country.

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## Introduction

Studies examining imperialism go as far back as the early 20th century. One such study by [Hobson \(1902\)](#), an English economist, analyzes the distinguishing features of imperialism. In his classical writing, imperialism is conceptualized from an economic perspective where its origin is aligned to a capitalist society. During that era, the mal-distribution of wealth created the desire to extend markets in order to increase profits ([Hobson, 1902](#)). Similarly, [Lenin \(1917\)](#) examines imperialism from an economic perspective, utilizing the capitalism paradigm. Other studies continue to investigate

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imperialism from an economic perspective (e.g. Cardoso & Faletto, 1969) within the framework of capitalism (e.g. Britton, 1982), as well as from the neo-colonization of developing countries' perspective (e.g. Esteve Secall, 1983).

Tourism is considered to be a form of imperialism (Nash, 1989), because it encourages investments by international organizations in developing countries to facilitate development (Webster, 1990). This consequently results in a power dominance relationship between the core and periphery nations (Galtung, 1971). Based on this rationale, this study explores the relationship between imperialism and tourism development, specifically from the perspectives of local residents in a developing island country. Local residents' views are imperative since they are the ones impacted by this development (Easterling, 2004). This study differs from previous studies that investigate the effect of other constructs on tourism development such as gender (e.g. Nunkoo, Gursoy, & Juwaheer, 2010; Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2012), occupation (e.g. Petrzalka, Krannich, & Brehm, 2006), place attachment (e.g. Gu & Ryan, 2008) and trust (e.g. Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2012; Nunkoo & Smith, 2013). This study specifically focuses on how residents' perceptions of imperialism may influence their perceptions of impacts and their support, which has not received much attention from contemporary tourism researchers.

This study specifically focuses on Jamaica, a developing island country, where tourism is considered to be a major developmental tool (Gossling, 2000). The majority of visitors to this destination are from developed countries, most of them coming from the United States of America (63.3%) (Jamaica Tourist Board, 2013). Also, Jamaica is located in the Caribbean region, which is claimed to be one of the most tourist-dependent regions in the world (Clayton & Karagiannis, 2008). Tourism contributes USD15.1 billion to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of this region, which is 4.5 percent of total GDP and this is projected to increase by 3.1 percent per annum to USD20.9 billion (4.3% of GDP) by 2022 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2012). The tourism industry in this region is used to stimulate growth and economic opportunities to deal with the increased pressures of globalization (Croes, 2010).

This research is conducted within the realm of three types of imperialism proposed by Galtung (1971). In his seminal piece, the inequality of the world's nations is discussed within the context of the political, economic and cultural forms of imperialism. He argues that political imperialism occurs when the core nations dominate the decision processes for the periphery nations to follow. Economic imperialism takes place when the core nations provide the means of production and the periphery nations provide the raw materials and the markets. Cultural imperialism occurs when the core nations provide the teaching and means of creation and the periphery nation becomes the learner. These constructs are fitting to this study since tourism development in developing island countries is characterized by foreign investments accompanied by power. Foreign power is a major concern for residents as it results in the loss of local control over resources (Sharpely, 2001) as well as the loss of local autonomy, and the economic and cultural drawbacks (Brohman, 1996).

The institutional theory is utilized as the conceptual framework in this study. It is defined as the institutional environment that stipulates the structure and behavior of an organization (Kostova, 1997). The institutional environment specifies what is appropriate and unacceptable (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), and comprises the political, economic, social and legal frameworks that form the basis for production and exchange (Oxley, 1999; Sobel, 2002). This theory can provide plausible explanations for the influence of foreign powers on the political, economic and cultural frameworks of developing island countries.

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the relationship between residents' perceptions of both imperialism and tourism in developing island countries; and consequently their support for its development. Three multiple regression analyses were used to analyze the relationships between residents' perceptions of political, economic and cultural imperialism and their perceptions of positive and negative impacts of tourism. The analysis also assessed the predictive role of impact perceptions in determining residents' support. A major contribution of this study is that three dimensions of imperialism were specifically examined in relation to residents' perceptions of and support for tourism development, particularly in a developing island country. This study, therefore, expands the literature and provides useful information for planners, policy makers and businesses in such countries.

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