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Research Paper

Community-based collaborative tourism planning in islands: A cluster analysis in the context of Costa Smeralda

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses residents' perceptions and attitudes towards tourism development and community integration in tourism planning in an island tourism destination whose economy is widely influenced by the presence of big external investors. Findings reveal that residents believe that tourism planning should be more sensitive to residents and tradition, and be able to guarantee a higher level of heritage proximity in order to achieve a more indigenous/endogenous-oriented development. Exploratory factor analysis and hierarchical and non-hierarchical cluster analysis were conducted. Four clusters were identified ('enthusiastics', 'moderate supporters', 'critics', and 'indifferents'), with significant differences in terms of employment reliance on tourism, length of residence, contact with tourists in everyday life, and level of education. Conversely, they did not differ based on gender, age, employment status, or geographical proximity to the tourist area, thus providing some contradictory insights when compared with previous studies. From a theoretical point of view, the findings seem to suggest that studies devoted to the investigation of residents' view and attitude toward tourism should concentrate more on the personal values of respondents and less on their socio-demographic characteristics, which often render the findings of cluster analysis very site-specific and hard to generalise. Managerial implications are discussed, and suggestions for further research are provided.

1. Introduction

It is widely recognised that tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world (UNWTO, 2015). In 2014, it contributed approximately 9% to the world's total GDP; further, it has been estimated that international tourist arrivals worldwide will increase by 3.3% per year between 2010 and 2030 to reach 1.8 billion (UNWTO, 2015). Tourism is widely considered as the main vehicle for economic development on islands (e.g. Croes, 2006), with other sectors often being unable to offset any downturn in tourism activity if and when this should occur (Brown & Cave, 2010). Therefore, tourism can potentially affect the residents' well-being and quality of life (e.g. Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy, 2013; Woo, Kim, & Uysal, 2015). The main goal in developing tourism is to maximise the positive impacts while minimising the negative impacts to the host community (Ritchie & Inkari, 2006). To ensure that the economic, socio-cultural, and environmental benefits of tourism development outweigh the related costs, and that tourism sustainability can be achieved, collaborative policymaking among local authorities, government agencies, businesses, and host communities is needed (Vernon, Essex, Pinder, & Curry, 2005). This is

particularly relevant in the case of islands, where sustainable tourism development asks for a high level of community integration (Chen, 2006) in order to preserve their local identity and the unique natural and cultural resources that they own (e.g. Croes, Lee, & Olson, 2013). Hence, in considering and taking into account residents' views, a development process is needed to obtain their support for tourism projects (Ap, 1992) and is crucial for the sustainability of tourism (Woo et al., 2015) and its long-term success (e.g. Fotiadis, Yeh, & Huan, 2016; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). A host community that is positively disposed and hospitable will enhance tourists' experiences (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000; Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002), increase tourists' willingness to revisit the destination (Fridgen, 1991), and make tourists more inclined to spread by word of mouth (both online and offline) a positive image about their destination (Chen, Dwyer, & Firth, 2014), thus significantly helping to position the destination brand (Simpson & Siguaw, 2008).

Tourism development on islands is a popular topic in the tourism literature (e.g. Hampton & Christensen, 2007), as is tourism sustainability (Oreja-Rodríguez, Parra-López, & Yanes-Estévez, 2008; Yasarata, Altinay, Burns, & Okumus, 2010). Sustainability, especially

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in island tourism destinations, is very important, given the growth of economic, environmental, and social challenges. In this type of tourism destination, community-based tourism becomes pivotal (Timothy, 1999). Regrettably, some inequalities can occur on islands in the way benefits generated by tourism are distributed within the local community (Thaman, 2002); hence, collaborative policymaking and community integration are needed to avoid these inequalities at undesirable levels. Finally, island tourism is often characterised by a distinct and unique heritage that represents, together with other aspects (remoteness, wilderness environment, etc) one of the main attractions to the destination (Brown & Cave, 2010). According to previous studies, heritage could lose its meaning if residents, among the other local stakeholders, are not involved in the decision-making process (Garrod & Fyall, 2000).

Despite this, only a handful of papers have focused on analysing residents' perceptions and/or attitudes toward tourism development and community integration during the planning process (e.g. Bestard & Nadal, 2007; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Mitchell & Reid, 2001; Nunkoo, Gursoy et al., 2010; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2010; Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001), especially when an island's economy is widely influenced by imperialism (e.g. Sinclair-Maragh & Gursoy, 2015). Further, very few studies have applied cluster analysis and/or have been carried out considering the context of Italy.

This paper was therefore carried out with the aim of contributing to the current and limited body of knowledge about residents' perceptions and attitudes toward tourism activity and their involvement in tourism planning in the context of island tourism destinations. The research site of this study is Arzachena, a municipality on the island of Sardinia (Italy), whose administrative boundaries include the greater part (90%) of Costa Smeralda, one of the most well-established tourism destinations in the world.

There were several reasons why it was decided to apply the study to this tourism destination. First, according to recent research, the destination can be described as being in the mature and stagnation stages of its lifecycle (Del Chiappa, 2012). Hence, for policymakers and destination marketers 'it becomes pivotal to call for increased revitalization efforts, ideas and input from the community residents' (Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001, p. 345). Further, the increase of tourism on the island is frequently sporadic: this circumstance calls for tourism planning and management that is process-oriented through mutual adjustments between stakeholders instead of outcome-oriented, and it must be cognizant of host communities dynamics (Carter, 2004). Finally, the tourism development of the area was and still is widely influenced by the presence of big external investors, thus rendering the research site particularly interesting to investigate residents' perceptions, attitudes, and integration in tourism planning in the context of islands widely influenced by imperialism.

Specifically, the aim of the study is to profile a convenience sample of 890 residents based on their perceptions and attitudes towards tourism development and based on their self-reported level of community integration in tourism planning. Further, it aims to investigate whether significant differences exist among the clusters based on their socio-economic and demographic characteristics (i.e. gender, age, level of education, employment status, geographical proximity to tourist area, economic reliance on tourism, length of residence, and contact with tourists in everyday life).

2. Literature review

Based on the current literature, residents play a relevant dual role in tourism development. On the one hand, the local community, with its traditions, culture, and authenticity, is one of the main 'attractions' for people travelling driven by the purpose of experiencing and connecting with the local culture and authenticity (Murphy, 1985); this means that the host-guest cohabitation and interaction are pivotal in shaping and co-creating the tourist experience. On the other hand,

the local community represents one of the main stakeholders, as it is the one most closely affected by the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural impacts of tourism. As widely recognised by tourism literature, these impacts can be both positive and negative.

Tourism can positively influence the life standards of residents, increasing their income, creating new job opportunities, improving the local infrastructure, increasing the availability of entertainment facilities, promoting the local identity, and so on. Nonetheless, tourism also has the potential to create negative impacts by increasing the cost of living and micro-crimes, exacerbating overcrowding and traffic congestion, and altering the ecosystem (e.g. Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002; Choi & Sirakaya, 2006; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Madrigal, 1995; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990; Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001). Social exchange theory suggests that residents' perceptions toward tourism impacts affect their support for tourism development (e.g. Andereck et al., 2005; Ap, 1992; Perdue et al., 1990).

A deep understanding of residents' perception and attitudes toward tourism development is therefore pivotal to obtaining their support for tourism projects (e.g. Ap, 1992; Brida, Osti, & Barquet, 2010), to foster their sense of belonging to the place, and to plan a future course of action that is sensitive to their needs and desires (Sirakaya-Turk, Ekinci, & Kaya, 2007) and that is able to guarantee their well-being. In an attempt to achieve effective resident empowerment and to foster residents' sense of belonging to the community, it would also be useful to assess the so-called heritage proximity, that is, 'the perceptual distance between residents and heritage promotion in a particular location' (Uriely, Israeli, & Reichel, 2009, p. 859). However, it should be noted that resistance to building a community tourism product may come from political leaders, a dominant industry, the chamber of commerce, local businesses, residents, environmentalists, and public agencies at all levels (Blank, 1989).

Community tourism analysis concurs with the idea that planning is a pluralistic process in which different stakeholders have, or should have, equal access to the economic and political resources (Reed, 1997). Blackstock (2005, p. 39, citing Hall, 1996) argues that 'community[-]based tourism (CBT) centres on the involvement of the host community in planning and maintaining tourism development in order to create a more sustainable industry'; said in other words, community-based tourism planning allows us to harness citizens' opinions about tourism development issues (Reed, 1997). To achieve this aim, community-based tourism planning is needed. Collaboration in relation to community-based tourism planning has been defined as 'a process of joint decision making among autonomous key stakeholders of an inter-organizational community tourism domain to resolve problems of the domain and/or to manage issues related to the domain' (Jamal & Getz, 1995, p. 188).

It should be noted that the analysis of residents' views and attitudes toward tourism ('the listening') is a necessary but insufficient condition for achieving collaborative community-based planning. Having analysed such views and attitudes, policymakers and destination marketers should effectively involve residents in tourism planning, thus making them the subject of development (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000) and allowing them to act as stewards of the natural and cultural resources, caring for and conserving them effectively (Tsaour, Lin, & Lin, 2006). Missing this goal would undermine tourism sustainability. For example, Garrod and Fyall (2000) noticed that heritage could lose its meaning if a wide range of local stakeholders is not properly involved in tourism planning. In addition to guaranteeing involvement of residents in the decision-making process, achieving community integration is needed to favour community-based collaborative policymaking able to move toward more sustainable tourism development. According to Mitchell and Reid (2001), community integration is defined 'in terms of decision-making power structures and processes, local control or ownership, type and distribution of employment, and the number of local people employed in the local tourism sector...and

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