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Residents' perceptions of wine tourism development



Shuangyu Xu ^a, Carla Barbieri ^{b,*}, Dorothy Anderson ^c, Yu-Fai Leung ^d,
Samantha Rozier-Rich ^e

^a School of Hospitality, Sport and Tourism Management, Troy University, 159 Collegeview, Troy, AL 36082, USA

^b Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management, North Carolina State University, Box 8004 Biltmore Hall, Raleigh, NC 27695, USA

^c Department of Forest Resources, University of Minnesota, USA

^d Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management North Carolina State University, Box 7106, Jordan Hall 5107, Raleigh, NC 27695, USA

^e enRiched Consulting, LLC, Houston, TX, USA

H I G H L I G H T S

- The study examines residents' perceptions of wine tourism development.
- Residents are neutral in their perceptions of local wineries in terms of personal benefits and community impacts.
- Demographics, wine enthusiasm, and trails' tourism comprehensiveness are associated with residents' perceptions.
- Personal benefits mediate residents' perceptions of community impacts.

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A B S T R A C T

Wine trails have been studied insufficiently within the tourism literature despite of their recent rapid development worldwide. In response, this study examines residents' perceptions of wine tourism development in terms of personal benefits and community impacts. It also explores whether residents' socio-demographics and levels of wine enthusiasm, and wine trails' tourism characterization influence residents' perceptions. Following a stratified random sampling procedure, residents living along two wine trails in the Piedmont region of North Carolina (U.S.) were surveyed. Results indicate that residents are neutral in their perceptions of the Piedmont wineries in terms of both personal benefits and community impacts. Residents' socio-demographics and level of wine enthusiasm, as well as the comprehensiveness of wine trails' tourism amenities were significantly associated with residents' perceptions. Results also indicate that personal benefits mediate residents' perceptions of community impacts. In addition to the theoretical and methodological contributions, this paper outlines management implications for wine trails.

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1. Introduction

Wine trails have grown considerably in numbers in the last decade around the world (America's Wine Trail, 2015; MacLeod & Hayes, 2013). Despite such popularity and their relevance to economic development (Bruwer, 2003), literature on wine trails is scant as the main body of wine tourism studies focuses predominantly on entire wine regions. The limited number of studies on

wine trails has primarily examined marketing issues, such as identifying current and potential visitors, exploring marketing strategies for further development to attract new visitors (Hashimoto & Telfer, 2003; Jaffe & Pasternak, 2004), or has evaluated wine trails' performance in terms of visitors' satisfaction and managerial constraints (Correia, Passos Ascensão, & Charters, 2004). The extant wine tourism literature reveals a scarcity of studies assessing local residents' perceptions of wine trails, which is incongruent with the fact that residents are key stakeholders in regional tourism development (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Sautter & Leisen, 1999).

Limited understanding of local residents' perceptions of wine trails challenges trail planning and management. For example, the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: shuangyuxu@troy.edu (S. Xu), carla_barbieri@ncsu.edu (C. Barbieri), dha@umn.edu (D. Anderson), leung@ncsu.edu (Y.-F. Leung), samrich3@gmail.com (S. Rozier-Rich).

lack of genuine community participation resulting from residents' distrust and uncertainty about tourism development is a significant constraint to developing and managing tourism routes (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004). This is not surprising, considering residents' perceptions of tourism development are a main determinant for successful tourism (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004) and residents' involvement is directly related to their support for tourism development endeavors (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Teye, Sirakaya, & Sönmez, 2002).

Residents' perceptions of tourism development have been examined in terms of personal benefits (McGehee & Andereck, 2004), as a suite of economic, socio-cultural, and environmental impacts in surrounding communities (Byrd, Bosley, & Dronberger, 2009; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004), or with regards to community satisfaction (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2009). Some attributes have been found to influence residents' perceptions of tourism endeavors, including demographic characteristics (McGehee & Andereck, 2004), level of economic dependency on tourism sector activities (Liu & Var, 1986), and length of residence in the local community (Lankford & Howard, 1994). Geospatial attributes in terms of residence distance to a specific tourism attraction or town, have also drawn some researchers' attention for shaping residents' perceptions of regional tourism development (Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002; Harrill & Potts, 2003; Harrill, 2004; Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; McGehee, Lee, O'Bannon, & Perdue, 2010; Raymond & Brown, 2007).

Albeit the existing collection of studies on residents' perceptions of tourism development, there is scarce information related to linear tourism settings and particularly wine trails. Filling this knowledge gap is pertinent taking into consideration the burgeoning of wine trails around the world and their suggested capacity to foster economic development that can span across cities, counties, and even countries. A better understanding of the attributes influencing residents' perceptions of wine tourism is also desirable from the management perspective as residents' support is fundamental to further tourism development and to enhance community satisfaction. Community stakeholders and policy makers can also use information on residents' perceptions to foster the sustainable development of local communities.

Thus, a study was conducted in the Piedmont region of North Carolina (U.S.) to examine residents' perceptions of local wine tourism covering a set of personal benefits as well as a suite of economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts in surrounding communities. The Piedmont region was chosen as the study setting because it hosts the majority of wine trails in the state of North Carolina and because of their rapid, albeit recent, growth. Specifically, this study addressed three objectives: (1) assess residents' perceptions of local wine tourism development in terms of personal benefits and community impacts; (2) examine whether residents' socio-demographic characteristics and level of wine enthusiasm, and tourism characterization of wine trails are associated with residents' perceptions of local wine tourism development; and (3) examine the mediating effect of perceived personal benefits on perceived community impacts associated with local wine trails.

2. Literature review

Perceptions are mental interpretations of individual's experiences, which may be substantially different from reality (Lindsay & Norman, 1977; Pickens, 2005). Thus, in the tourism context, perceptions are examined to understand how stakeholders (e.g., local residents, tourists) interpret the impacts -positive and negative- of a given tourism development (e.g., wine trails). Given that

perceptions inform individuals' attitudes (i.e., tendency to behave in certain way) and that both terms are closely related (Pickens, 2005), attitudes and perceptions are used interchangeably in many tourism studies and are measured with similar items and scales (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; McGehee & Andereck, 2004). The following paragraphs describe the theoretical evolution of residents' perceptions related to tourism development aiming to layout the rationale behind different approaches and measurements used in their assessment. Then, attributes found to influence residents' are summarized.

2.1. The theoretical evolution of residents' perceptions studies

Studies on residents' attitudes and perceptions in tourism communities date back to the 1960s, when the main focus was to examine the perceived positive impacts (i.e., benefits) derived from tourism development (Jafari, 1986). A decade later, when the deterioration of natural and cultural resources arose from tourism development started to be evident, benefits-related studies evolved to include negative impacts (Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Pizam, 1978). In this context, the Social Exchange Theory became a suitable framework to assess residents' perceptions of tourism development because it accounts for the complex and dynamic evaluations behind individuals' decisions seeking to maximize the value of their experiences (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf, & Vogt, 2005; Choi & Murray, 2010; Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams, 1997). Thus, individuals are likely to engage in a certain behavior if they perceive a positive exchange in which benefits outweigh costs (Andriotis, 2005; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011; Wang & Pfister, 2008). In the case of tourism, residents within a community are more likely to positively support or engage in tourism development if the benefits perceived from such development outweigh the costs (Andereck et al., 2005; Chen & Chen, 2010; Lankford & Howard, 1994; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990).

In the 1990s, researchers started focusing on the sustainability of tourism development that required a more holistic approach to integrate different stakeholders' (including residents') perceptions into the evaluation of an array of positive and negative impacts that tourism produces in the destination in the environmental, and socio-cultural, economic domains (e.g., Milman & Pizam, 1988; Perdue et al., 1990). Research on residents' perceptions also moved from macro (e.g., statewide) to micro approaches by exploring specific variables predicting residents' perceptions of tourism within communities (McGehee & Andereck, 2004). The quest for sustainability in the new millennium has triggered a renewed interest in residents' perceptions of tourism developments, especially related to the impacts on the environment and society (Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2009; Northcote & Macbeth, 2006).

2.2. Measurements of residents' perceptions: community and personal approaches

Traditionally, studies assessing residents' perceptions of tourism development concentrate on the suite of impacts produced in the community and the environment (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). Common perceived benefits associated with tourism are increasing employment opportunities, improving quality of life of local residents, and cultural exchange between tourists and residents. Perceived negative impacts include the increase in the prices of goods and services, increase in traffic congestion, and damage to natural environment and landscape (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Ko & Stewart, 2002). Theoretical advances related to tourism impacts and the complexity of individuals' attitudes, pushed toward

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