

RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD PERCEIVED TOURISM BENEFITS

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ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing research on host community perceptions toward tourism development, there is limited research on small island developing states (SIDS). This study aims to investigate the residents' attitudes toward tourism development in Mauritius, a small island developing state. Using a face-to-face questionnaire, data was collected from local residents in a community situated in the north of the country. Following data collection from a questionnaire, factor analysis and regression analyses were conducted. The results revealed that the majority of residents are supportive of tourism development in the region. Socio-cultural and economic impacts had significant and positive influence on tourism development, while environmental impacts had a negative influence on future tourism growth.

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KEYWORDS: Host community, Residents, Sustainable tourism development, Mauritius, Small island developing states (SIDS)

INTRODUCTION

For the long-term success of the tourism industry, it is important to understand and assess the residents' attitudes regarding the impact of tourism development (Ap, 1992; Ritchie and Inkari, 2006). Sustainable tourism development can only be achieved if stakeholders are involved in the process (Byrd, Bosley and Dronberger, 2009). Sustainable tourism entails that the community is the focal point of the tourism and planning process (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005). Additionally, investigating the host community's perceptions of tourism is important because it influences their behavior toward tourism (Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003). More than 83 academic studies were found related to residents' perceptions regarding the impact of tourism (Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003) which reflects the importance of understanding their perceptions regarding tourism development. These research have been conducted targeting communities worldwide, including those in Europe (Snaith and Haley, 1999), Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific (Fredline and Faulkner, 2000; Mason and Cheyne, 2000), Asia (Kayat, 2002), Africa, North America (Carmichael, 2000; Gursoy, Jurowski, and Uysal, 2002; Wang and Pfister, 2008) and Latin America. However limited studies were found in small island developing states (SIDS) and more precisely islands of the Indian Ocean. As a SIDS in the Indian Ocean, Mauritius faces the challenge of a small geographical size, peripheral location to sustain its economy. Mauritius is an important destination for international tourists and over the last 20 years, there has been an annual rise in the number of tourists.

In 2000 there were 656, 453 international tourist arrivals as compared to 930, 456 in 2008 (AHRIM, 2009). This growth has brought drastic changes to the economic and social structures of the country which was supported by the direct and indirect impact of tourism on job creation, foreign exchange earning and economic growth. The community is one of the main pillars of sustainable tourism development and knowledge about the perceptions of the residents is important in the success of the tourism industry, yet little is known about the local community perceptions of tourism in Mauritius.

The paper remainder is organised as follows. The next section reviews the relevant literature on tourism development and its benefits on host community. The research methodology is then presented followed by the results and discussion. Finally the conclusion and limitations of the study are presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism has contributed to the domestic economies in many parts of the world. It is considered as an export industry (Law, 1992) even though the consumers must come to the destination for consumption (Debbage and Daniels, 1998). Local communities use tourism as an export to attract foreign exchange and accomplish other economic goals such as generation of wealth, employment creation and improvement of living standards. Tourists may be directly or indirectly be involved with the host community. The literature has revealed numerous studies on hosts' community perceptions of tourism development and identified host community perceptions in four dimensions: economic (Pizam, 1978; Belisle and Hoy, 1980; Liu and Var, 1986), social (Pizam, 1978; Perdue, Long and Allen, 1987; King *et al.*, 1993), environmental (Pizam, 1978; Liu and Var, 1986) and cultural (Liu and Var, 1986; Gilbert and Clark, 1997). Byrd and Gustke (2004) found that perceived impact was one of the main predictors for stakeholder support for sustainable tourism development in their community. Therefore, a clear understanding of the attitudes and interests of the host community is a necessary precursor to the planning and management of sustainable tourism.

Tourism Development

Recognizing the role stakeholders have in the tourism development process, numerous studies have explored attitudes and perceptions of individual stakeholder groups in the hopes of better understanding them (Long *et al.*, 1990; Jurowski, Uysal, and Williams, 1997; Brunt and Courtney, 1999; Andereck and Vogt, 2000; Pizam, Uriely, and Reichel, 2000; Gursoy *et al.*, 2002; Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Weaver and Lawton, 2004; Wickens, 2004; Cottrell, Van der Duim, Ankersmid, and Kelder, 2004; Poria, Reichel and Biran, 2006). Several studies have examined the perceptions of the host community toward tourism development and the literature shows that perceptions of residents differ toward tourism development. A larger number of studies have demonstrated that residents who are dependent on the tourism industry or perceive a greater level of economic gain are likely to have a more positive perception of the economic impact of tourism than other residents (Lankford and Howard, 1994; Jurowski *et al.*, 1997; Sirakaya, Teye and Sönmez, 2002). Economic benefits are the most important elements sought by local residents from tourism development (Ritchie, 1988; Husband, 1989; Akis *et al.*, 1996). Economic benefits include increased investment and tax revenues and improved standard of living. Tourism is a way to create employment where options are restricted (Fainstein and Gladstone, 1999). Lindberg and Johnson (1997) reported that people who placed a greater amount of importance on economic development had more positive attitudes toward tourism.

The impacts of tourism consist not only of the economic aspect such as employment creation and generation of wealth, but also of a socio-cultural and environmental component. The socio-cultural benefits include modernization and exchange among cultures, social change, enhanced image of host community, improved public health, social and amenity improvements, education and conservation (Travis, 1984). Other studies have also found that tourism should also improve the standard of living of the residents (Liu, 2003). Social impact has been recognized as support for tourism development within host communities and fundamental precondition for a sustainable industry (Ap and Crompton, 1998; Gursoy *et al.*, 2002; Teye *et al.*, 2002; Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Jurowski and Gursoy, 2004; McGehee and Andereck, 2004; Nyaupane and Thapa, 2006; Zhang *et al.*, 2006). Liu (2003) adds that sustainable tourism should meet the needs of the local population's standard of living over the short and long terms. According to Allen *et al.* (1993), residents agreed that their community should attract more tourists because this would lead to a higher quality of life.

The environment in the tourism context includes the physical environment to include wildlife, the farmed environment, built environments, and natural resources (Swarbrooke, 1999). Environmental benefits are also important and consist of improved infrastructure and enhanced recreational facilities. Hence the perceived benefits of tourism consist of several pillars and tourism development should protect local and national culture, improve social and individual well-being, and preserve the surrounding environment (Choi and Sirakaya, 2005).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A questionnaire was developed following a review of existing literature on residents' attitude toward tourism development (Long, Perdue and Allen, 1990; Perdue *et al.*, 1990, Johnson, Snepenger and Akis, 1994; McCool and Martin, 1994; Lankford and Howard 1994, Madrigal, 1995; Akis, Peristianis and Warner, 1996; Ap and Crompton, 1998, Choi and Sirakaya, 2005). The questionnaire comprised of 24 items and respondents were requested to demonstrate their perceptions toward the role tourism played in their community by rating their level of agreement with each statement on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). In addition, two statements, adopted from Andereck and Vogt (2000), were used in the analysis were designed to assess the host's perceptions of overall directions of future tourism development options within the island. An open-ended question was included which dealt with the greatest contribution of tourism in the host community area. Demographic characteristics of age, gender, level of education, years of service and monthly household income were also captured in the questionnaire. A pilot test was conducted on the questionnaire to ensure its clarity, reliability and comprehensives. Twenty questionnaires were distributed to the local community residing in the coastal region. Some modifications to the wording were made as a result of the pilot test. In addition, a reliability analysis was used to test the reliability of the 24 items. The reliability analysis revealed that the alpha coefficient was 0.78, which exceeds the minimum coefficient (0.5) suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

The sampling frame focused on locals living in the northern region as this area displayed extensive tourism development. The sample size was 500 valid surveys, with a sample error of 5 percent and a confidence level of 95 percent in the worst-case scenario. The questionnaire was distributed door-to-door in the Northern coast of the island and if an individual refused to participate, the next household was intercepted and asked to participate. The survey was carried out in the period of March-May 2009. The Northern coast was selected because of increased tourism development in this region. The community does not only rely on fishing and agriculture as the North coast is an important tourist destination where numerous hotels, bungalows, restaurants, pubs, shops and other tourist amenities dominate the region. Data analysis was carried out by using descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation and t-test. An exploratory factor analysis was performed to reduce the number of host community attributes to a few correlated dimensions and the VARIMAX rotation methodology was used. A multiple regression analysis was conducted on the data to explore the impact of future tourism development on each dimension derived from the factor analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The majority of respondents were young (56.4% were less than 37 years old). There was a roughly even distribution of men and women with 49.2% for men and 50.8% for women, respectively. Most of the respondents were married (57.2%), while 43% were still single. The incomes of the household surveyed reported from \$500 to \$1500 (48%). Most of the respondents have been working in the tourism industry for more than 10 years (65%). With regard to educational background, 23.4% had a university degree, 29.6% of the respondents were diploma holders, while 47% attained secondary school level.

Validation of Scales

Respondents were requested to demonstrate their attitudes toward the role tourism played in their community by using the 5-point Likert-type scale for each statement. Factor analysis was conducted to assess the dimensionality of the 24 items. All exploratory factor analyses were initially performed using the principal axis factoring method and Varimax rotation with the Kaiser Normalization. The Bartlett test of sphericity was significant (Chi-square = 3005.04, $p < 0.000$). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was computed to quantify the degree of intercorrelations among the variables, and the results indicate an index of 0.755. Since the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was larger than 0.6, it showed that the use of factor analysis was appropriate. A cut-off factor loading of 0.5 and an eigenvalue greater than or equal to 1 were used (Hair *et al.*, 1998). The principal component analysis (with varimax rotation) of the 24 items resulted in a three-factor solution that explained 69.70% of the total variation. Each of the items loaded strongly on one of the three factors. Cronbach's internal consistency reliability is the most widely used reliability test methods. Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) recommended that a score of 0.7 or higher is desired reliability while 0.6 or higher is an acceptable reliability coefficient for research at the early stage of the scale development. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the three factors ranged from 0.64 (lowest) to 0.89 (highest) with a total scale reliability of 0.78. This indicates that the variables exhibited a strong correlation with their factor grouping and thus were internally consistent.

Table 1 displays the items, factor loadings, eigenvalues, Cronbach's alpha and descriptive statistics. The first factor labeled 'socio-cultural benefits' explained 37.55% of the total variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.78 and mean of 3.82. This factor contained eight perception items including cultural activities and facilities and quality of life. The second factor named as 'economical benefits' accounted for 21.37% of the variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.89 and mean of 3.66. This factor comprised eight items such as tax revenues, employment, income, and investment/business. The third factor, 'environmental impacts' explained 10.78% of the total variance with a reliability coefficient of 0.64 and mean of 3.84. This factor incorporated eight items related to improvement of roads and other public services, urbanization and better quality of buildings and city planning. Furthermore, the mean value of each factor was examined in this study to examine the overall hosts' attitudes toward tourism.

Table 1 shows that the host community tends to agree that tourism has a positive impact on community development in the island. As indicated in Table 1, the mean value of factor 1 is 3.82 (SD = 0.72), the mean value of factor 2 is 3.66 (SD = 0.65) and the mean value of factor 3 is 3.84 (SD = 0.87). The results indicate that overall, hosts are generally favorable to tourism and demonstrate substantial support for tourism development in their community. The results of the study demonstrate that at a community level there is a strong support for tourism development, particularly due to its economic benefits. The host community perceived that tourism development helps to enhance community life with items such as availability of entertainment facilities in the area and variety of cultural activities in the community.

The host community also perceived that the industry has a positive influence on the community's economy as a result of economic diversity, job creation, and tax revenue. The community felt that tourism can help improve the local environment which included items such as preservation of natural and cultural resources, and beauty of the island. They felt tourism has a positive influence on community services offered, including items such as improvements of roads and public services. The results of t-tests ($p < 0.01$) carried out for each item separately across the three factors, suggest that host community positively perceived tourism development in their community in relation to creation of more jobs, attracting more investment to the community, providing more business for local people, creating additional tax revenue, resulting in more cultural exchange between tourists and residents, creating positive impacts on the cultural activities of the community, providing more recreational and sport areas for local residents, and maintaining high standards of roads and public facilities. The host community believed that social and cultural life in the Northern coast has improved. Andriotis and Vaughan (2003) contend that hosts'

perceptions and acceptance of tourism development is considered important to the industry's long-term success. The results indicate that when the host community perceives an increase in job creation, shopping and dining choices, along with more tourism activities associated with arts and cultural and environmental features, the more likely the residents are to observe tourism positively. The support of the host community for tourism development reveals that there is higher likelihood for the tourism industry to succeed.

Table 1: Impacts of Tourism on Host Community

Statements	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	Mean	SD	t-value
Socio-Cultural Impacts ($\alpha = 0.78$)					
Tourism encourages a variety of cultural activities by local population, e.g., crafts, arts, music		5.56	3.82	0.72	90.20
There is understanding of different people and cultures by residents	0.575		3.67	1.32	50.82
Tourism has increased local awareness and recognition of the local culture and heritage	0.596		3.56	1.19	54.74
Tourism has provided opportunities to restore and protect historical structures	0.649		3.86	1.16	60.73
There is a change in life style that occurs because of tourism development	0.667		3.80	1.31	52.97
There is a variety of shopping choices in the community	0.538		3.89	1.20	59.34
There is a variety of entertainment facilities in the area	0.662		3.98	1.32	41.10
Tourism development leads to a variety of restaurants in the area	0.630		3.98	1.44	37.75
	0.577		3.78	1.49	46.36
Economic Impacts ($\alpha = 0.89$)					
		2.32	3.66	0.65	72.61
The number of jobs in the community has increased due to tourism development	0.666		4.03	1.12	65.56
The personal income of local residents has increased due to tourism development	0.621		3.61	1.12	58.68
The standard of living of the host has increased because of tourism development	0.577		4.14	1.00	75.76
Tourism generates substantial tax revenues in the host economy	0.666		3.56	1.00	64.86
Tourism development leads to a high level of investment, development and infrastructure spending	0.735		3.44	1.14	55.22
Tourism development improves the quality of local services	0.702		3.60	1.29	51.01
Tourism creates new markets for the local products	0.621		3.38	1.47	41.82
There is a variety of shopping facilities in the area	0.749		3.49	1.59	40.18
Environmental Impacts ($\alpha = 0.64$)					
		1.76	3.84	0.87	67.70
The quality of natural environment is enhanced due to tourism development	0.681		3.23	1.45	40.77
There is improvement of roads and other public services	0.662		3.99	1.41	38.79
Host community benefits from recreation and sport facilities	0.534		3.85	1.43	36.43
There is better quality of buildings and city planning	0.511		4.63	1.13	58.72
The level of urbanization has increased due to tourism development	0.612		3.70	1.40	35.31
Tourism must improve the environment for future generations	0.768		3.65	1.44	33.53
Tourism development should strengthen efforts for environmental conservation	0.705		3.92	1.49	35.87
Proper tourism development requires that wildlife and natural habitats be protected at all times	0.684		3.72	1.02	39.22

All t-values significant at $p < 0.01$ level; SD = standard deviation

Table 1 displays the factor loadings, eigenvalues, Cronbach's alpha and descriptive statistics for the items under evaluation.

Tourism Development

The host community was also asked to rate their support for future tourism development (Table 2). Their beliefs for encouraging tourism development were strong, with a mean score of 3.79 out of 5.0. The host community is favorable to tourism development in their community. To test the influence of tourism benefits on encouraging future tourism development, a regression analysis was conducted using 'future

directions’ as dependent variable and socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts as independent variables as follows: Future tourism development = f (socio-cultural, economic, environmental impacts)

The results of the regression of the three host community impacts dimensions against the dependent variable of ‘future directions’ are presented in Table 2. In general, the model fit the data moderately well. The regression for “encouraging tourism development” indicated a good adjusted R² of 0.572. This indicated that 57% of the variation in “encouraging tourism development”. The F-ratio of 61.16 was significant (p < 0.000), indicating that the results could hardly have occurred by chance. The results indicated that all the three tourism impacts, namely socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts had beta coefficients that were statistically significant (p ≤ 0.001). It is observed that there was a positive relationship between socio-cultural and economic impacts and the dependent variable “encouraging tourism development”; however a negative relationship is observed for environmental impacts on encouraging tourism development.

The findings of this study are similar with previous studies where the host community perceived greater level of economic gain and hence perceived the impact of tourism development to be positive. They especially felt that tourism has positive effects on the local economy, such as improving the economy and creating jobs, and they also agreed that tourism can result in a number of quality-of-life improvements. However, the study findings further showed that the host community has concern for the environment. Recognizing the seriousness of ecological problems, the community has become increasingly environmentally conscious. It could be that the host community is conscious of the possible drawbacks of hotel constructions at the detriment of lovely beaches. This result has been identified by previous studies (Liu and Var, 1986; Liu et al., 1987; Teye et al., 2002; Kuvan and Akan, 2005).

Table 2: Hosts’ perceptions for Further Tourism Development

<i>Dependent</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>b-value</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t-value</i>
Encourage Tourism development in the community (mean = 3.79)	Socio-cultural Impacts	0.704	0.385	6.552*
	Economic Impacts	0.122	0.161	5.543*
	Environmental Impacts	- 0.247	- 0.237	- 2.255**
R ² = 0.574; F = 61.16; *p < 0.001; ** p < 0.05				

Table 2 shows the regression results measuring the dependent variable “encouraging tourism development” on the tourism impacts

CONCLUSIONS

This study was initiated to investigate the hosts’ community attitudes on the northern coast of the island on various relevant tourism impact items and assess their influence on future tourism development in Mauritius. The impact items covered in the study were related to social-cultural, economic and environmental aspects. Overall, the host community was positively inclined toward tourism and its development as the community possesses positive attitudes toward socio-cultural and economic benefits, clearly expecting that the Northern coast tourism industry would result in an overall better quality of life. In other words, the more benefits the host community perceived obtaining from tourism, the more likely they are to increase the support for tourism development and the more likely they are to attribute the improvement of their community to tourism development. However, the community has concern regarding the environmental impacts for future tourism development. The findings are in accordance with Liu and Var (1986) and other studies that have shown that respondents, to some overwhelming extent, are satisfied with tourism development. Understanding hosts’ attitudes can help destination developers and policy makers better assess the host community’s perceptions of tourism development.

The scales adopted for this study using factor analysis resulted in domains similar to those discovered previous studies. It is encouraging to see residents are aware of the many benefits of the social, cultural, and economic benefit of tourism while at the same time understand that it can have detrimental effects on

the environment of the destination community. The community enjoys the economic benefits that accrue from tourism. The findings reveal that the revenues brought by tourism development are not only reaped by the government but the benefits seem to have trickled down among members of the host community.

Limitations of Study

There are some limitations to the findings of this study that need to be acknowledged. First, the data sets available in this study were limited to only the Northern coast of the island, the results may not be generalized to other coastal regions toward tourism development. Therefore, it is possible that the resident reactions found in this study toward tourism development would be biased. Further study could be extended to the new development in the western coast and also the other coastal regions. Secondly, it may be useful to extend this research by conducting surveys on residents' individual characteristics such as age, gender and occupation in an attempt to identify whether differences and similarities exist that may lead to the proposition that there are common characteristics among residents to tourism development. In addition, the costs of socio-cultural, economic and environmental aspects were not presented in this study. For example, the respondents' attitude to tourism development in general would influence their reactions to future tourism development. This kind of information would assist the tourism planners in developing a policy for sustaining tourism development and aligning future growth and tourists' interests with the hosts' desires. Incorporating these forces in future studies would be beneficial and contribute to the tourism impact literature in small island developing state.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Tourism Development Impacts Statements	How would you rate the impacts for the attributes given in the column, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither disagree nor agree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree				
Tourism encourages a variety of cultural activities by local population, e.g., crafts, arts, music	1	2	3	4	5
There is understanding of different people and cultures by residents	1	2	3	4	5
Tourism has increased local awareness and recognition of the local culture and heritage	1	2	3	4	5
Tourism has provided opportunities to restore and protect historical structures	1	2	3	4	5
There is a change in life style that occurs because of tourism development	1	2	3	4	5
There is a variety of shopping choices in the community	1	2	3	4	5
There is a variety of entertainment facilities in the area	1	2	3	4	5
Tourism development leads to a variety of restaurants in the area	1	2	3	4	5
The number of jobs in the community has increased due to tourism development	1	2	3	4	5
The personal income of local residents has increased due to tourism development	1	2	3	4	5
The standard of living of the host has increased because of tourism development	1	2	3	4	5
Tourism generates substantial tax revenues in the host economy	1	2	3	4	5
Tourism development leads to a high level of investment, development and infrastructure spending	1	2	3	4	5
Tourism development improves the quality of local services	1	2	3	4	5
Tourism creates new markets for the local products	1	2	3	4	5
There is a variety of shopping facilities in the area	1	2	3	4	5
The quality of natural environment is enhanced due to tourism development	1	2	3	4	5
There is improvement of roads and other public services	1	2	3	4	5
Host community benefits from recreation and sport facilities	1	2	3	4	5
There is better quality of buildings and city planning	1	2	3	4	5
The level of urbanization has increased due to tourism development	1	2	3	4	5
Tourism must improve the environment for future generations	1	2	3	4	5
Tourism holds great promise in my community's future	1	2	3	4	5
The tourism industry will continue to play a major role in this community	1	2	3	4	5

1. The following questions are about your perceptions of tourism in Mauritius. There are several statements about the economic, social and environmental impacts that can result from tourism. Please indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, neither disagree nor agree, agree, or strongly agree with the following statements. There are no right or wrong answers, so please give the answer which most closely expresses your perceptions.

II. The following questions relate to your demographic background. Please tick the appropriate box below.

1. Gender:

- Male Female

2. Marital Status:

- Single Married Divorced

3. Your age group:

- 18 – 25 36 – 45 55 +
 26 – 35 46 – 55

4. Highest level of education:

- School certificate Diploma
 Higher School certificate Degree
 Others (specify :.....)

5. How many years have you been working in the Tourism Industry?

- Less than 1 year 5 years < 10 years
 1 year < 5 years > 10 years

6. What is your monthly income range?

- Less than \$500
 \$500 – \$1000
 \$1000 – \$1500
 More than \$1500

III. What is the greatest contribution of tourism in the area that you are living in?

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