

Community Perceptions of Tourism Impacts

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Introduction

Tourism impacts generally refer to contributions of tourism to destinations' economy, environment, as well as culture and community (i.e., economic, environmental, and socio-cultural impacts). Socio-cultural impacts, that are the focus of this chapter, refer to the human impacts of the tourism industry which arise from the presence of tourists at destinations and their interactions with host communities. This chapter discusses impacts of tourism on host communities, with particular attention to host communities' perceptions of tourism's social impacts, the importance of assessing community perceptions, factors influencing such perceptions, and issues and challenges in assessment of community perceptions.

Importance of Assessing Community Perceptions of Tourism Impacts

Host communities are important destination ambassadors who serve as a credible testimony of distinctive characteristics of a place (Wang, 2013). The community is an important component of the tourism product and should be used by the industry as a resource in development and marketing of destinations (Murphy, 1985). Although residents' positive attitudes towards tourism development can guarantee that tourism adds to the vitality of communities and that only the type of tourism accruing local's subjective wellbeing will be well-accepted by the locals (Wang, 2013), a lack of community-based approaches has been identified as one of the key shortcomings in tourism development (Tosun & Timothy, 2001). If the locals do not believe in, or become engaged in the process, then they may actively work to undermine the effort of the development agency (Reiser & Crispin, 2009). Understanding residents' attitudes and perceptions is crucial in tourism management.

With increasing critics of the traditional narrow focus of tourism on economic impacts and recommendations for a more comprehensive assessment with the inclusion of environmental and socio-cultural impacts, today's tourism businesses are practicing sustainability initiatives, focusing on respecting the environment and the people, and paying particular attention to the impacts on local communities. Increasingly, the host community has been recognized as a major player in decision-making about tourism management and the future direction of tourism, whose perceptions need to be well assessed and understood (Mason, 2016). Tourism policy makers and planners should endeavor to create sustainable communities that are resilient enough to survive in a highly volatile international environment, rather than solely focusing on sustaining tourism or specific aspects of tourism development (Potts & Harrill, 1998). As a community-based approach to tourism development is deemed a prerequisite to sustainable development (Ryan & Montgomery, 1994), residents' perceptions of tourism impacts should be a high-priority consideration in formulating policies and sustainable tourism planning (Brunt & Courtney, 1999).

Elements and Factors Influencing Community Perceptions

Primary theories utilized in explaining residents' attitudes and perceptions of tourism development include Doxey's (1975) irritation model, Butler's (1980) product life cycle, and social carrying capacity (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Doxey's (1975) irritation model or Irridex states that community residents in a destination area would modify their attitudes towards tourists over time. According to the Irridex, destination areas pass through four stages of irritation starting from euphoria, to apathy, to annoyance, and finally to antagonism. The host communities' attitudes and perceptions of tourism tend to switch from positive to negative along these four stages. Butler's (1980) concept of the 'product life cycle' suggests that every tourism

destination evolves through six linked stages: exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, and post stagnation. The features of each stage can be indicators of residents' attitudes and perceptions. For instance, at the early stages of 'exploration' and 'involvement', resident attitudes would conform to Doxey's 'euphonia'; at the stages of 'stagnation' and 'post-stagnation', resident attitudes would conform to Doxey's 'annoyance' and or 'antagonism'.

Social carrying capacity (SCC) is defined as the level at which the host population of an area becomes intolerant of the presence of tourists (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). Similar to the previous two theories, SCC explains how residents' attitudes and perceptions vary along the process of tourism development. The underlying premise of the SCC theory is that residents' quality of life will improve during the initial phases of tourism development which are welcomed by host communities until the destination reaches its maximum carrying capacity; then from that point on any additional development will cause negative impacts. One common connotation of these three theories is that along the process of tourism development, host communities' perceptions of tourism impacts tend to evolve gradually, starting from being positive at the initiation and turning to negative with saturation and overdevelopment.

One theory that has been frequently applied in empirical assessment of residents' perceptions of tourism is the social exchange theory (SET). Ap (1992) was among the pioneer tourism researchers applying this theory to tourism research, who described SET as a general sociological theory concerned with understanding the exchange of resources between individuals and groups in an interaction situation. The definition suggests that individuals tend to be positively disposed toward actions from which they benefit and negatively disposed toward actions from which they incur costs of some kind (McGehee & Andereck, 2009). Based on SET,

residents' perceptions of tourism are influenced by factors such as residents' level of involvement and utilization of resources, as well as perceived costs and benefits of tourism development (Gursoy, Jurowski, & Uysal, 2002). More recent empirical studies have paid attention to the influence of residents' sense of social identity (Wang, Zhou, Lee, & King, 2014) and place identity (Wang & Chen, 2015; Wang & Xu, 2015) on their perceptions of tourism impacts. It has been found that residents' sense of community, place-based self-esteem, and self-efficacy affect their perceptions of tourism impacts as well as their reactions to tourism development. While both SET and place identity theory have been found to be significant in examining residents' perceptions, it is recommended that both theories complement each other in better assessment and understanding of host communities' perceptions of tourism impacts.

Another stream of research has indicated that the type of tourism activities, the features of a host community, and the nature of interactions between the tourists and community residents are the key factors that determine the nature of tourism impacts (Wall, 1997). First, the impact made by tourism depends on both the volume and profiles of the tourists (Archer, Cooper, & Ruhanen, 2005), including their length of stay, ethnic/racial characteristics, and their activities. For instance, small numbers of tourists are relatively unobtrusive compared to mass tourists; tourists who stay longer may have more significant social/cultural impacts on the community, especially when the tourist and local populations are greatly different in terms of ethnic/racial origin or economic status (Kreag, 2001). Second, numerous studies indicate that residents' demographics such as gender, age, marital status, income, and religion (e.g., Almeida-García, Peláez-Fernández, Cortés-Macias, & Balbuena-Vázquez, 2016; Chen, 2000; Huttasin, 2008; Singla, 2014), as well as their value system (Williams & Lawson, 2001) are important factors in explaining their perceptions of tourism impacts. Third, the interactions between tourists and host

communities can alter societal characters of the host community such as daily life, value system, family relationships, attitudes, traditional beliefs, and behavioral patterns (Zhuang, Yao, & Li, 2019).

Host Communities' Perceptions of Socio-cultural Impacts of Tourism

Host communities' perceptions of social impacts of tourism can be either positive or negative depending on the value system and judgement of the impacts. A review of the literature on the host communities' perceptions of tourism impacts indicate some major positive and negative impacts that are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Host Communities' Perceptions of Tourism Impacts

| Positive Impacts | Negative Impacts |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New job opportunities - Improvement of quality of life - Psychic income - Strengthening of social fabric and empowerment of women - Preservation and revitalization of host community's cultural identity - Cultural exchange | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crowding and congestion - Crimes, gambling, drugs, and prostitution - Exclusion of community residents from resources and services - Racism and exploitation of local workers - Displacement of residents - Deterioration of traditional culture and customs |

Positive Impacts

New job opportunities

Tourism creates new jobs and fosters revitalization of the communities especially in poor or non-industrialized regions. In developing or underdeveloped regions in particular, tourism can encourage social mobility through changes in employment from traditional agriculture to service industries and may result in higher wages and better job prospects (e.g., Alrwajfah, Almeida-García, & Cortés-Macías, 2019; Huttasin, 2008; Tovar & Lockwood, 2008; Zamani-Farahani & Musa 2012). For instance, the villagers of Baan Rawai, which is one of the most popular tourist

attractions in North of Thailand, strongly agreed that tourism reduces the unemployment rate, gives villagers additional job opportunities, and consequently increases family income, improves the pride of villagers and their living conditions (Huttasin, 2008). Residents in India's city of Jaipur believed that infrastructural developments such as hotels, educational institutes, malls, shopping complexes, eating outlets etc. has substantially decreased the out migration of young adults from their family (Singla, 2014).

Improvement of quality of life

Tourism can improve the quality of life in a host community by improving local facilities and infrastructure (Marzuki, 2011), increasing the number of attractions, providing recreational opportunities and services, and enhancing the local economy which lead to employment opportunities, better education and health care. Tourism development creates opportunities for upgrading communities' outdoor recreation facilities, parks, and roads that would not otherwise be upgraded; service by local shops, restaurants, and other commerce facilities gets upgraded to meet tourists' expectations. As tourism develops, community residents enjoy a greater range of choices in tourism events and facilities which makes living in the community more comfortable and convenient.

Andereck, Valentine, Knopf and Vogt (2005) explored urban residents' perceptions of community tourism impacts in Phoenix, Arizona, USA and observed that residents of Phoenix agreed that in addition to the economic benefits, tourism enhanced the public services provided to the community. In a study of two rural destinations in Iran, Zamani-Farahani and Musa (2012) found that residents believed that tourism positively impacted their community through preserving their culture, enhancing the community's image, increasing their quality of life which referred to upgraded infrastructure and public facilities as well as health and education services.

Tovar and Lockwood (2008) studied the social impacts of tourism in the Cradle Coast region of Tasmania, Australia and found out that the residents living in the farmland appreciated the enhanced lifestyle and leisure opportunities that arise from tourism development. Similarly, Piuchan, Chan and Kaale (2018) mentioned enhanced education and infrastructure as positive impacts of tourism in Hong Kong. Tangit, Hasim, and Adanan's (2014) study in Malaysia indicated that residents believed that tourism development led to improvement of infrastructure and education which enhanced their quality of life.

Psychic income

Enhancement in psychological wellbeing of a community, commonly referred to as psychic income, has been found to be another positive social impact of tourism (e.g., Zhang, Chen, Lei, & Malone et al., 2013; Hiller & Wanner, 2015). Studies on special event tourism, particularly large-sale sport event tourism, have repeatedly noted psychic income as a positive impact acquired from increased sense of pride and national identity linked to enhanced destination image, heightened sense of community, as well as enhanced excitement and a collective mood shift due to the festive environment surrounding the event (e.g., Heere, Walker, Gibson, Thapa, Geldenhuys, & Coetzee, 2013). For instance, Hiller and Wanner's (2015) assessment of Vancouver and London Olympic games showed that residents in both cities perceived a collective positive mood and strengthened sense of community as positive impacts of hosting the games in their city. Similar results have been found in other cases of major and mega sport events such as Super Bowl XLIII hosted in Tampa Bay, USA (Kim & Walker, 2012), World Men's Handball Championship (Pranic, Petric, & Cetinic, 2012), and Beijing Olympic Games (Zhang et al., 2013).

Strengthening of social fabric and empowerment of women

Tourism contributes to not only the economic growth but also social development especially in the rural areas of the less developed countries. Tourism helps to strengthen host community's social fabric and prevent rural exodus through creating jobs and generating income. Along with tourism development, new forms of family organization emerge with new definitions of gendered roles and divisions of labor. Also, involvement in tourism development reinforces the relationships and connections among the members of a host community.

Additionally, tourism development has been found to be related to reduced gender inequalities, especially when responsible tourism or ecotourism is introduced to the community. Ecotourism has the potential to increase gender equity and promote women's empowerment through income-generating activities and education (Iranlu & Shah, 2014). Tourism development has the capacity to act as a true vehicle for women's empowerment (UNWTO, 2010). Nzama's (2008) study in South Africa showed that men felt pressured by women's new empowered position as they got involved in tourism related jobs outside of the domestic space.

Preservation and revitalization of host community's cultural identity

Tourism development helps to revitalize host communities' traditions and customs, and hence preserves cultural identities and fosters civic pride (Acquah, Nsor, Arthur, & Boadi, 2017; Mustafa, 2014). Tourists' interest in local culture and history provides opportunities to support preservation or rebirth of local arts, crafts, and traditional cultural activities (e.g., Andereck et al., 2005; Besculides, Lee, & McCormick, 2002; Huttasin, 2008). Besculides et al. (2002) found that communities living along the Los Caminos Antigua's Scenic and Historic byway in southwestern Colorado, USA perceived a stronger sense of ethnic identity and tolerance as one of the most important benefits of tourism. Similarly, tourism could increase residents' pride in their own

culture (Tangit et al., 2014). Villagers in Thailand believed that tourism could encourage traditional social dynamics by preserving traditional activities; tourism brought them not only pride in being self-sufficient, but also pride in the cultural and traditional heritage of their village (Huttasin, 2008).

Cultural exchange

Cultural exchange and learning that lead to positive change has been repeatedly mentioned as a positive impact of tourism (e.g., Mustafa, 2014; Tangit et al., 2014; Zamani-Farahani & Musa, 2012). Tourism offers community residents opportunities to meet new people, experience different cultural practices, expose themselves to new perspectives, and enhance their appreciation for different approaches to living (Kreag, 2001). Ratz's (2000) study in Hungary indicated that residents considered interaction with people from other cultures and learning new languages as notable positive impacts of tourism.

Negative Impacts

Crowding and congestion

One of the most cited negative social impacts of tourism is crowding and congestion. Establishing major tourism facilities within communities that are not accustomed to the tourism industry could ruin the community's resources and disrupt the overall rhythm of life. In more traditional communities where humans live close to the nature large number of tourists can overwhelm the natural peace by increasing traffic, noise pollution, and depletion of resources. In urban destinations, congestion and crowding especially in areas close to tourist zones have been noted as issues that negatively impact residents' quality of life. Congregation of tourists in public areas of the host communities, the consequent congestion and crowding can cause stress and annoyance that bring about other social problems.

As observed by Sharma, Dyer, Carter and Gursoy (2008) in the case of the Sunshine Coast region, traffic congestion was the most important of the three major social impacts perceived by residents (the other two were crime and the surrounding environment) wherein ninety-two percent of the respondents agreed that traffic congestion was the most negative tourism impact. Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh and Ismail (2017) found similar results in Langkawi Island in Malaysia where increase in litter, crowding, congestion and noise were reported as notable negative impacts of tourism. Piuchan et al. (2018) found similar results in Hong Kong where tourism caused issues such as overcrowding in shopping malls, restaurants, and traffic congestion that downgraded residents' standards of living.

Crimes, gambling, drugs, and prostitution

Community residents copying tourists' behaviors that are perceived negatively based on the social codes and value set of the host communities (e.g., excessive drinking, inappropriate dress, vandalism, casual sex) creates social problems (Kreag, 2001). Additionally, tourism contributes to social ills such as begging, gambling, drug trafficking, and prostitution (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992). Smith's (1992) study of Pattaya, Thailand supported the view that tourism development brought prostitution, drug abuse which was linked to many tourist deaths, sex-related disease and injuries, and police corruption. "The exploitation of mainly women (but also children – both male and female) through prostitution in the developing countries was a feature of the last three decades of the twentieth century and has continued into the twenty-first century" (Mason, 2016, p. 52).

Increase in the crime rates due to tourism can be more of an issue in developing countries with high rates of poverty where there is a big economic gap between wealthy tourists and locals. Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2007) investigated residents' perceptions of the social-cultural impacts

of tourism in a case study of Mauritius. Petty crimes, thefts against tourist on public beaches, break-ins in bungalows, armed robbery, and incidents of assault and robbery against tourists who stayed at beachside bungalows run by unregistered proprietors were found to be examples of tourism induced crimes. Prostitution was another emerging problem in Port Louis, the capital city of the island, and it existed in other regions of the country as well, and most prostitution clients were foreigners (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2007).

Exclusion of community residents from resources and services

Development of tourist facilities in host communities may limit residents' access to their local resources; traditional services may be replaced by businesses that serve to tourists' interests. For instance, residents may temporarily and seasonally experience shortage in water, power, and fuel supply. Also, increased pressure on the infrastructure may create other types of restricted access for residents. Subsequently, residents may lose control over community's resources and services.

This was found to be the case in Sharma et al.'s (2008) study where with the continuous growth of both domestic and international tourism, residents were concerned about the increase in prices of tourism-related goods and services, as well as housing. Increased litter and pollution, and diversion of public money away from non-tourism service provisions were other perceived negative impacts (Sharma et al., 2008).

Racism and exploitation of local workers

Aligned with extreme negative view of tourism as a neo-colonial enterprise (Mathieson & Wall, 1982), several studies have noted the emergence of racial exploitation as a negative consequence of tourism in developing countries (Bello, Carr, Lovelock, & Xu, 2017; Mbaiwa, 2005) where higher-level better-paying tourism jobs become dominated by expatriates and local

workers end up getting low-paying jobs (Mbaiwa, 2005). Hence, in such destinations tourism is associated with leakage since a significant portion of tourism revenues is transferred from the developing destination to tourist origins (Mathieson & Wall, 1982); local workers become subject to discrimination, inadequate work conditions, unfair treatment and dismissal by foreign managers (Mbaiwa, 2005). In Mbaiwa's (2005) study in Botswana, racial mistreatment mainly came from white expatriates to black local workers, and educated black locals were unlikely to get managerial positions since high-rank high-salary jobs were reserved spots for white expatriates.

Displacement of residents

Over-dependence of host communities on tourism and displacement of locals has been identified as another major negative impact of tourism. When tourism takes over as a major employer in the host communities, traditional activities such as farming or fishing may decline; residents have to modify their way of life for at least part of the year in destinations where tourism is a seasonal activity. Such changes can lead to the breakdown of the conventional family structure and relations or alter the structure of the community which further undermines the stability of the community. In remote and isolated areas, the arrival of too many visitors can even cause local people to leave their settlements and move to new areas where they can remain undisturbed (Archer et al., 2005). In a place with overdevelopment of tourism or over-dependence on tourism, local people may be excluded from enjoying the natural environment of their own place of residence.

Gjerald (2005) conducted a case study in North Cape, Norway, where tourism is a seasonal activity, and found that tourism brings income and stability to the community, but at the same time it undermines this stability by altering the structure of the community. Residents

feared that the tourism industry will eventually turn the community into ‘a season-based enterprise.’ Many respondents also felt like they were ‘resigned from the family’ during the hectic summer months (Gjerald, 2005). Gutberlet (2016) explored the socio-cultural impacts of a large-scale cruise line tourism on a traditional bazaar (souq) located opposite the port in the Omani capital, Muscat. Findings indicated that the souq, overwhelmed by cruise tourists, had become “the core of a tourist bubble,” where crowding was a major problem and local residents avoided the place. As a result, Omani vendors left their businesses and rented their shops out to expatriates.

Deterioration of traditional culture and customs

As more tourists visit a travel destination, the real experiences they would normally encounter often lose their meaning. Cultural artifacts and performances can become packaged for convenient consumption by visitors. Commercialization of tourism activities and commoditization of cultures create packaged experiences to allow tourists to see a culture. This eventually can cause traditions to become routine and inauthentic. Hence, the cultural products may lose their traditional significance and simply become a tourist attraction that is no longer meaningful to the community. For instance, the authentic Balinese dance has been shortened for tourist events, and the dancers’ costumes have been made more colorful and attractive than what the tradition dictates. Thus, tourists end up paying to see what they expect to see instead of the authentic performance (Mason, 2016). Such alternations and commodification may eventually erase some aspects of the traditional culture altogether. Where culture is part of the tourist attractions, over-amplification of cultural traits to satisfy tourist tastes may create an inauthentic culture. In such a case, tourism contributes to uprooting of traditional society and causes

deterioration in traditional culture and customs of the host countries (Ahmed & Krohn, 1992; Marzuki, 2011; Singla, 2014).

More prominent negative socio-cultural impacts of tourism are the demonstration effect and acculturation in the host culture, which arises in many developing countries especially to young people. The demonstration effect occurs when observing tourist actions lead to behavioral changes within the host population. This may result in resentment of the local community if they are unable to obtain the goods and lifestyle demonstrated by the visitors. Furthermore, the demonstration effect creates a societal divide among natives as some of them have taken on the attitudes and behaviors of tourists. Nevertheless, Shaw and Williams (2002) discussed that the demonstration effect can be positive when residents attempt to learn and upgrade their standards of living.

The difference between demonstration and acculturation is that the former means simply observing tourist will lead to behavioral changes in the community while the latter may occur when the host and guest interactions are longer and deeper (Williams, 1998). Acculturation takes place when two or more cultures come into contact for a sustained period and exchange ideas (Liu & Var, 1986). This becomes more of an issue when there is a big cultural gap between tourists and locals. Particularly, in more traditional non-industrialized cultures tend to become overwhelmed by tourists from more developed Western countries (Weaver & Lawton, 2001).

Issues and Challenges in Assessment of Community Perceptions

Assessment of community perceptions of tourism impacts may encounter various issues and challenges. For instance, perceptions of tourism impacts depend on values and norms of the host communities; identifying such values and norms could be a challenge since there are different sub-groups within each community who may perceive the tourism impacts differently

due to their distinct value system. In addition, studies of residents' perceptions of tourism impacts have often relied on data collected through questionnaire surveys or interviews while individuals' perceptions are mainly subjective which may not be strictly scientific; the difficulty of quantifying the social impacts of tourism complicates the development of impact methodologies (Archer et al., 2005). Moreover, residents' perceptions of tourism impacts are subject to not only the values defined by the host community but also the demographic characteristics. Discussed below are the issues and challenges related to assessment of host communities' perceptions of tourism impacts, including heterogeneity in community perceptions, limited theoretical precision, and inconsistent demographic effects.

Heterogeneity in community perceptions

According to Jurowski (1996), different types of resident groups exist within a community such as attached residents, resource users, and environmentalists. Attached residents would like to see positive contributions of tourism to the community's quality of life and civic pride; resource users would be considering whether tourism will enhance or deteriorate the use of the shared resources and services available to them in the community; and environmentalists tend to see more of negative impacts of tourism development on the environment. Even previously homogenous communities that adopt a specific approach to tourism will be divided into diverse groups that display different responses to tourism developments (Dogan, 1989). The heterogeneity in attitudes and perceptions of residents creates a challenge to decision makers who try to reach consensus (Lindberg, Anderson, & Dellaert, 2001).

As explained earlier in this chapter, the stage-based theories such as Doxey's (1975) Irridex and Butler's (1980) product life cycle imply that host communities' perceptions of tourism impacts may evolve with the tourism development. Accordingly, economic gain is

usually highlighted in the early stages of development, then negative socio-cultural impacts become apparent. Small numbers of visitors are often relatively unobtrusive as compared with mass tourists, but once the numbers reach a point where residents feel a sense of displacement or loss of identity, resentment may result.

As illustrated in Table 1, the same type of change can be perceived both positively and negatively. For instance, with good management and planning, tourism can provide an impetus for preservation of a destination's culture and customs but can also become a catalyzer for deterioration of culture and customs if malfunctioned; tourism development with a community-based approach can help upgrade the community services and improve the residents' quality of life, however, overdevelopment of tourism can limit the residents' access to the resources and services.

Limited theoretical precision

Early studies on residents' attitudes and perceptions of tourism were criticized for being atheoretical. As a result, it was not clear to researchers how, why, and under what conditions host communities react to the impacts of tourism (Nunkoo, 2016). Doxey's Irridex and Butler's product life cycle are rather proposed explanations of tourism phenomena, with a lack of empirical evidence for the establishment of the two theories. The social exchange theory is deemed to have made the most notable theoretical contribution to studies on residents' perceptions of tourism impacts. Yet, the application of the theory tends to rely on an incompletely specified set of ideas; an important criticism of the social exchange theory is that it lacks sufficient theoretical precision and thus has limited utility (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017).

Inconsistent demographic effects

Previous studies show that residents' demographic profiles affect their perceptions of tourism impacts. Income (Chen, 2000), ethnicity (Um & Crompton, 1987), religiosity (Zamani-Farahani & Musa, 2012), gender (Huttasin, 2008), marital status (Singla, 2014), and age (Wang, King, & Heo, 2010) are some of the most influential demographic characteristics. Nevertheless, it is noticed that the influences are not consistent across different destinations. For instance, Huttasin (2008) and Nzama (2008) observed that gender is an influencer wherein women tend to have more positive attitude towards tourism, yet Almeida-Garcia et al.'s (2016) study indicated no gender-effect on perceptions of tourism impacts. In terms of marital status, Singla (2014) found that married residents were more concerned about negative impacts of tourism. In contrast, Almeida-Garcia et al. (2016) observed married residents had more positive perceptions of tourism impacts. With respect to age, Wang et al. (2010) noted that senior residents are more likely to report positively on tourism development than junior residents which was also echoed by Almeida-Garcia et al. (2016). Singla (2014), however, observed that the younger residents had more positive perceptions towards tourism industry, and older residents were less positively disposed towards tourism. The perceptual dissonance constitutes another challenge for attempts to generalize the demographic effects. Future studies should consider identifying the factors that cause such inconsistency.

Conclusions

Host communities are an important component of the tourism product which should be considered as a resource in tourism marketing and management. To maximize the positive impacts, minimize the negative impacts, and ensure the sustainability of tourism development, residents should be involved in the decision-making process as a major player and their

perceptions of tourism impacts should be an important consideration in planning and formulating policies. Community-based tourism, local ownership and management, and/or partnership and collaboration are examples of strategies that can enhance community's involvement. Informing and educating the residents about the potential impacts of tourism development, and also about the influence of relevant elements and factors on their perceptions are key in the success and sustainability of tourism development.

Assessment of host communities' perceptions of tourism impacts is a complex and challenging process due to dynamic nature of tourism development process and the community's values, composition and demographic characteristics of the residents. Every host community's perception of tourism impacts can be different and unique, affected by its tourism development stage and style as well as the community characteristics. In culturally diverse societies, the conflicts and tensions between the stakeholders impact the levels of tourist development (Archer et al., 2005). Yet, it is the enhanced welfare of the local community that is the key yardstick of success for a competitive destination (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Thoughtful policy making and planning with the involvement of not only the politicians, planners, developers, but more importantly the host communities, can do much to maximize the positive and minimize or remove the negative impacts.

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