

RESIDENTS-TOURISTS RELATIONSHIPS - THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS ON THE RESIDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD TOURISM

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Abstract:

Tourism has witnessed an outstanding development during the last few decades and has proven its resilience and ability to recover following periods of crisis. Numerous topics related to the development of tourism have been tackled and given its impact on the tourism destination, it is only natural that particular attention has been paid to the residents-tourists relationships under their various forms of manifestation. The present paper aims at presenting the residents' perception of the impact of tourism in Constanta (Romania), a tourist city on the Black Sea coast. To this end, a descriptive research of quantitative type was performed and several hypotheses were formulated regarding the influence of a set of socio-demographic variables on the residents' attitude toward tourism. The research revealed there were differences in the attitude toward tourism between professional groups and age groups, while gender and income did not seem to have a significant influence.

Keywords: tourism, residents-tourists relationships, tourism acceptance, destination development

1. Introduction

Tourism has witnessed an outstanding development during the last few decades and has proven its resilience and ability to overcome the 2007 global financial crisis. Moreover, had it not been for the staggering and unprecedented crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the year 2020 would have probably continued the growth tendency of the industry. Therefore, the interest of academia in studying tourism and its impact on the development of the tourist destination is not at all surprising.

Several research topics have been tackled, from the sustainable development of tourism to its economic and social impact on the tourist destination. While the positive economic effect of tourism is almost unanimously recognized, concerns about its continuous expansion and impact on the environment have been raised and numerous proposals were made concerning the ways to protect the destinations for future generations (Hunter and Green, 1995; Page, 2009).

The impact of tourism on the residents' lives as well the residents-tourists relationship, have also been addressed especially starting with the 1970s'. A vast plethora of studies approached the generous research topic of residents-tourists

relationship in countries with different levels of economic development (Ross, 1992; Gilbert and Clark, 1997; Rogerson, 2002; Nepal, 2008; Woosnam and Norman, 2010; Armenski et al., 2010; Abdollahzadeh and Sharifzadeh, 2014; Janusz et al., 2017; Cardoso and Silva, 2018; Koens and Postma, 2018; Escudero Gomez, 2018; Tichaawa and Moyo, 2019). The type of destination in focus also varied from islands (Mitchell and Reid, 2001; Hanafiah et al., 2013; Perez and Nadal, 2005) to mountainous resorts (Weaver and Lawton, 2001; Su et al., 2005). The studies tackled both the perceptions of residents regarding the impact of tourism (Ap, 1992; Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996; Dongoh Joo et al.; 2018, Moraru et al., 2021), as well as the tourists' perspective on the way residents influence their vacation experience (Mo et al., 1993; Murphy et al., 2000). Regarding residents' perceptions on the impact of tourism, one may observe that while generally, the residents consider that tourism has a positive economic impact, the perceptions on the social and environmental impact vary (Getz, 1994; Lankford, 1994; Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996; Gursoy and Rutherford, 2004).

The present article aims at presenting the residents' perception of the impact of tourism in Constanta (Romania), a tourist city on the Black Sea coast and is structured as follows: introduction, research methodology, results, and conclusions.

2. Research methodology

Sampling and data

Constanta is a well-known tourist destination on the Black Sea coast and the capital of Constanta County, which encompasses an array of tourist resorts. The number of tourists on the Romanian seaside has increased constantly, and bearing in mind that the tourist season is rather short (approximately 2.5 months, between mid-June and the end of August), the residents' lives are affected by the phenomenon. Considering the adult population of 263 001 (aged above 18 years, according to the official statistics provided by the County Statistics Directorate for the year 2019) the z-score $z_{\alpha}=1.96$, corresponding to a confidence level of 95 %, the margin error $e=0.05$, the probability to obtain an affirmative answer to the question addressed $p=.5$ and applying the formula proposed by Daniel and Cross (2013), the resulting sample size was of 384. Given the general situation, the survey took place online in the autumn of 2020 (October-November). From the total number of responses received, there were extracted the 384 needed responses, on a first in - first out principle, to obtain a representative sample, based on the age criterion (18-25 years – 8 %; 26-35 years – 17 %; 36-45 years – 20 %; 46-55 years – 17 %; 56-65 years – 17 %; over 66 years – 21 %).

The research instrument

To obtain the necessary information a multiple question questionnaire was drafted based on previous research (Pizam, 1978; King et al., 1993; Milman and Pizam, 1988). The questionnaire aimed at obtaining information about the residents' attitude toward tourism impact on the city development and the residents' lives, on the residents' interaction with tourists, on the impact of the tourist activity on the image of Constanta, as well as on tourists' behaviour. The final section of the questionnaire focused on obtaining information regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as gender, age, studies, professional status, and monthly average income per family member.

The software

For the data analysis, IBM SPSS Statistics 23 was used.

The Acceptance and support for tourism index (IA)

An Acceptance and Support for Tourism Index (IA) was computed, as an average of four variables: 1. general favourability toward tourism (measured on a five-point semantic differential, from 1 – very little acceptance to 5 – very high acceptance), 2. general living conditions in Constanta city as a tourist city (measured on a five-point semantic differential from 1 –very unsatisfying to 5 – very satisfying), 3. the impact of tourism on city image (measured on a five-point semantic differential from 1 – severe worsening to 5 – significant improvement), and opinion on whether tourists’ numbers should increase/decrease or remain at the current level.

The research hypotheses

Several research hypotheses were formulated regarding the socio-demographic variables influence on the residents' acceptance of tourism.

H1. There is a significant difference between male and female respondents regarding their acceptance of tourism.

H2. There is a significant difference between age groups regarding the residents' acceptance of tourism.

H3. There is a significant difference between professional status groups regarding the residents' acceptance of tourism.

H4. There is a significant difference between income groups regarding the residents' acceptance of tourism.

3. Results

The sample structure is presented in table 1.

Table 1

Sample structure							
Gender			Studies				
Female	Male		Elementary education	Secondary education	Bachelor and Post-university		
(%) 57.55	42.45		0.52	13.02	86.46		
Socio-professional status							
Employees	Students	Entrepreneurs	Freelancers	Retired	Stay-at-home persons	Unemployed	
(%) 57.29	19.01	11.46	4.69	4.17	2.08	1.30	
Income (Lei)							
1346-1500	1501-2500	2501-3500	3501-4500	4501-5500	5501-6500	>6500	
(%) 13.02	22.04	19.01	15.10	8.33	7.03	15.10	
Age (years)							
18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	Over 66		
(%) 8	17	20	17	17	21		

To test the formulated hypotheses, non-parametric tests were employed, given that the variables were not normally distributed (Shapiro-Wilk tests were performed).

To test the first hypothesis, a Mann-Whitney U test was used. All the four assumptions were met for performing the test (the types of variables used, the

independent variable consisted of two categorical independent groups, independence of observations, and the distributions for the two independent groups had similar shapes). The test results revealed there were no significant differences in the attitude of male (Median =3.25, n=163) and female (Median =3.25, n=221) respondents, $U=17249.00$, $z=-.717$, $p=.473$.

To test the second hypothesis, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was considered. The data passed three of the four assumptions required to perform the test (the type of the dependant and independent variables and independence of observations). However, the fourth assumption regarding the shape of the distributions was not met. The test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the acceptance toward tourism between the different age groups, $\chi^2(5) = 12.778$, $p = .026$, with a mean rank of 233.52 for the age group 18-25, 185.88 for the age group 26-35, 179.47 for the age group 36-45, 163.09 for the age group 46-55, 204.92 for the age group 56-65, and 208.14 for the age group over 65. Based on Dunn's tests with Bonferroni correction, the difference in mean ranks between the 18-25 and the 46-55 age group was significant ($p=.05$).

For the third hypothesis, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was considered and the data failed to pass the assumption regarding the similarity of the shapes of distribution. The test showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the acceptance toward tourism between the different professional status groups, $\chi^2(6) = 18.276$, $p=.006$, with a mean rank of 228.14 for students, 192.38 for employees, 168.64 for entrepreneurs, 131.06 for stay-at-home persons, 200.22 for retired, 129.53 for freelancers, and 188.00 for unemployed. Based on Dunn's tests with Bonferroni correction, the difference in mean ranks between the freelancers and the students' group was significant ($p=.014$).

For the fourth hypothesis, a Kruskal-Wallis H test was considered and the assumption regarding the similarity of the shapes of distribution was not met. The test revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in the acceptance toward tourism between the different income groups, $\chi^2(6) = 11.725$, $p = .068$.

4. Conclusions

The research focused on the residents' attitude toward tourism in a city on the Black Sea coast. An index of acceptance and support for tourism was computed to reveal the influence of the socio-demographic variables (gender, age, professional status, and income) on the residents' attitude toward tourism. The research revealed there were differences in the attitude toward tourism among professional groups and age groups, while gender and income did not seem to have a significant influence. While there are numerous studies focused on the residents-tourists relationships, the influence of the socio-demographic variables on the residents' attitude toward tourism was less investigated. Armenski et al., 2011, in a study conducted in Serbia, showed that there were significant differences in the perception and acceptance of foreign tourists with regard to age, level of education, and place of residence. In a study conducted in Iran, Abdollahzadeh and Sharifzadeh (2014) revealed that the level of education, gender, and age influenced the residents' perception regarding tourism development. In a study on the residents' attitude toward tourism in Central British Columbia, Nepal (2008) found that gender influences the support of tourism.

The residents' attitude toward tourism is important due to the role the residents play in the development of the destination and the quality of the tourist experience of the visitors. Therefore, understanding the residents' attitude and perceptions, as well as the particularities of different resident groups is of utmost importance to the sustainable development of the destination. The article offered merely a glimpse at the vast and interesting issue of the residents-tourists relationship in a preferred summer tourism destination but may open other related research directions, considering the unprecedented and challenging times brought by the pandemic and the subsequent recovery of tourism.

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