

ASSESSMENT OF RESIDENTS TO TOURISM DEVELOPMENT AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES

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Abstract

One of the most fundamental issues of sustainable development is environmental protection. In this context, the knowledge of the community's views on the environment directly serves the sustainable development strategy of the region. The purpose of this study is to better understand this issue by investigating inhabitants' opinions on tourism development in the study area as well as their attitudes toward the environment and nature in general. The objectives of the study aim to test empirically:

1) how the inhabitants of Saranda and Ksamil assess the development of tourism in their area, and

2) the community's attitudes toward nature and the environment in general. The hypothesis of the study is defined: The environmental attitudes of residents in the study area tend not to be in harmony with nature. The findings of this study contribute to the evidence that the destruction of natural resources in this region is not a result of residents' negative attitudes about the environment and nature in general.

Keywords: *sustainable development, environmental attitudes, community.*

JEL classification: A1, G1, O1.

Introduction

The economic and social opening of Albania after 1991, created new opportunities for the development of tourism in our country, especially in coastal areas, encouraging individual private investment, which structured tourism of small size and accompanied by fragmentation. extreme of the local tourist landscape. The district of Saranda, with the change of the system after 1990, faced potentially dramatic changes and many challenges. The area is highly dependent on traditional industries such as agriculture, tourism, and services. The environment of the area is widely known for the unique quality of the landscape. However, many of his special qualities are under threat. Changes in agricultural practice, which have been influenced by public policies, have resulted in land fragmentation and a lack of care for it. The tourism industry in Saranda has grown rapidly generating significant amounts of revenue. The development of tourism results in the expansion of the construction of hotels without criteria, without respecting the criteria for public areas and spaces and all this seems like a chaotic development. The growth of mass tourism has created positive impacts on the economy; however, it has also impacted the natural environment, which is mostly seen as a negative impact. In the natural aspect, the development of tourism has created pollution of the environment, and water, damage to the landscape, damage to the land, and damage to the ecosystems. As in other countries, these show that our natural resources are being destroyed by human use. The tourism industry, as one of the largest economic providers in the Saranda

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area, performs poorly compared to the extraordinary opportunities it has. The economic potential of outstanding landscape quality has not yet been realized to the proper extent. The district of Saranda is rich in the field of tourism with unique cultural and historical identities, as well as beautiful natural resources. The district of Saranda has an ancient culture and together with the unique natural aspects and stunning surroundings possesses great potential for the development of the tourism industry. The surroundings have cultural and natural components which can be developed as a quality attraction and generate investments, gain more income in the local community in addition to agriculture and handicraft production.

Description of the Problem

Why study residents' perceptions? Residents are part of the tourist activity and can contribute to the (un)success of the tourist experience lived in a destination. Residents' attitudes and behaviors towards visitors influence their decision to return (or not) to the destination. Residents are one of the tourism actors most affected, in their daily lives, by tourism development. To successfully develop a sustainable destination, it is necessary to involve the community in the planning, management, and monitoring of tourism activity.⁵² Nowadays, it is important to clarify whether the residents in the study area have points of view that are in harmony with nature and if they consider that sustainable use of resources is advantageous in its development.

Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects ... and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions ... Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building ... (UNWTO, n.d., para 7–8) The main tourism sustainability consensus culminates in the three-pillared concept of sustainability, renamed the natural, socio-cultural, and economic pillars (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000; Swarbrooke, 1999; UNWTO, 2004).

The Our Common Future report (WCED, 1987) suggests that sustainable development should maintain the integrity and diversity of the ecological environment, meet basic human needs, keep options open for future generations, reduce injustice among and between generations, and increase self-determination. The concept is widely accepted by governments and industry representatives (Wall, 2000), and the tourism industry and academia also embrace it. Inskeep (1991) identifies and defines five pillars of sustainable tourism, which include the economic, environmental (meaning natural), and social responsibilities of tourism as well as its responsibility to tourists (meaning assuring visitor satisfaction) and to global equity in development. Behavioral sciences have proven that the actions of residents to the environment where they live and work are influenced by their attitudes toward nature. The point of view on the environment is defined as "a state of mind of the individual towards a value" (Allport 1966) and as "an enduring predisposition to a particular aspect of the environment" (McDougall and Munro 1987).

In the literature, it is discussed that people's actions towards the environment in which they live, may be different depending on their views of nature (Jurowski, Uysal, & Williams, 1997). The values and preferences of residents for the preservation and utilization of development resources can vary based on their views on human relationships with the natural environment (Gursoy, Jurowski, and Uysal, 2002). Jackson (1987) states that "one of the most urgent issues

⁵² A reflection on the Alentejo's residents' perceptions on tourism: Is really there some sustainability? M.^a do Rosário Borges & Joana Lima, Tourism and Sustainability: Case Studies from the Mediterranean Region, on January 26th, 2022

in the management of resources is the problem of finding a compromise acceptable between use of nature for fun and its protection for ecological, cultural, scientific, historical and aesthetic reasons. These researchers have examined the relationship between environmental attitudes and support of policies to protect the environment and have noticed that two groups are identified: “ecocentric” attitudes and “anthropocentric” ones. The ecocentric approach proposes that humans should live in harmony with nature, while the anthropocentric reflects the view that nature exists primarily to serve the needs of people. Jurowski, Uysal, and Williams (1997) studied the attitudes of people "in terms of their environmental concerns about values and their impact ecocentric support for tourism development. They concluded that ecocentric attitudes of residents have a direct impact on supporting the development indicating a significant positive relationship with the sustainable use of resources on which is based the general development.

Methodology and Data

Research Method

Questions, Objectives, and hypotheses

Based on the literature review and the research objectives, we have formulated questions for the study as follows: 1) How do the residents of Saranda and Ksamil assess the development of tourism in their area? 2) What are their views on nature and the environment?

The objectives of the study aim to test empirically: 1) to know the assessment of residents for the tourism development, and 2) the environmental residents' attitudes.

Based on the research questions, objectives, and theoretical bases to explain the issues raised, the following hypothesis of the study is defined: The environmental resident's attitudes in the study area, are anthropocentric and their actions tend not to be in harmony with nature. This study employed the Linkert scale as a measurement scale for measuring residents' attitudes about their environment and used individual qualitative techniques for the data collection on the motivations and attitudes of the residents and it distributed 450 questionnaires.

Research Design

On the basis of the literature, the theoretical framework of this study consists of measurement and analysis of two factors: the assessment of residents for the development of tourism and the environmental residents' attitude in the Saranda and Ksamil areas.

Measuring the attitudes of residents toward the environment, in this study, is estimated by the New Environmental Paradigm, which was originally developed by Dunlap and Van Lier (1978). This view refers to the inevitably imposed limitations of people's actions over nature, the importance of preserving the natural balance, the need for sustainable economic development, or the need to reconsider the idea that nature exists solely to satisfy human needs (Dunlap & Van Lier, 1978).

The new environmental paradigm considers that: man is capable of harming the natural balance, there should be limits on the economic and human growth of the society and humanity has the right to rule over the rest of nature. The rate of a new environmental paradigm is treated as mass adoption of a paradigm or underlying worldview attitudes, beliefs, and values of the environment. People's attitudes about their environment can affect their actions on the environment and its preservation from damage. This scale of measure has solid content, predictive, and constructs validity, for measuring residents' attitudes to the environment. For the above reasons, this study used a new environmental paradigm as a measurement tool to assess residents' views of nature and the environment.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, this research consulted the mature

scales in foreign references in the process of operational definition and measurement of the variables like motivations and attitudes of the people. For their measurement, the Linker scale was used. Note on this scale indicates a degree of acceptance or rejection of the submission given in it.

In this research, a survey is conducted to get the data required for the study. The preliminary questionnaire was examined carefully and critically by specialists in the field, and revisions are made according to the feedback. Through the process of specialists examining case interviews and pre-test the final questionnaire includes twelve items for the environmental residents' attitudes as shown in Figure 1, with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

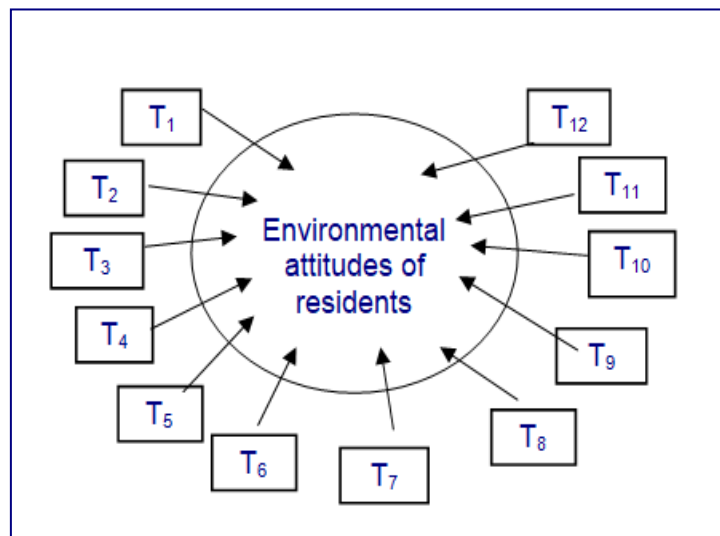


Figure 1. Evaluation path diagram of environmental attitudes of residents

Source: Author

Research Subject

Residents of Saranda and Ksamil Municipality are the subjects of the present study. The target population owns the information we desired to respond to the objectives of this study. Hence, the sample can be considered to be a good representative of the residents in the study area. The survey was handed out to the respondents to avoid any uncertainty that may come up in the answer to the questions. The present research distributed 450 questionnaires and 396 valid samples are collected. Upon receiving the responses, the data was fed into a data file for analysis. Finally, descriptive analysis is carried out using SPSS based on the objective mentioned earlier in the paper.

Results

Results of the assessment of residents for the development of tourism

Tourism is the main direction of the economy in the study area and community participation in its development is very important. To understand how to estimate the actual development of the area, data were received from the questionnaire concerning the answer to the question "How do you assess the development of tourism in your area?" The results of the data according to their evaluation are presented in Table 1. The data shows that 45% of respondents assess the development of tourism in their area to be chaotic and harmful and only 11% of them think that it is appropriate development.

Table 1.

Frequency of residents' responses to the question:

How do you assess the development of tourism in your area?	Frequency	Percentage
1. Chaotic development	165	42
2. Appropriate development	42	11
3. Harmful development	13	3
4. Development that serves community	176	44
<i>Source: Author</i>		

Results of measurement of the environmental attitudes of residents

This study employed the Linkert scale as a measurement scale for measuring residents' attitudes about their environment. A high score on this scale means an indication of a highly ecocentric attitude. From the results presented in Table 2, the questions that express the negative impact of the intervention of man on the environment have a consistency degree greater compared with assertions positive as "human intervention in nature often brings disastrous results" ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 1.070$), people are very abusive to earth ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.057$), the natural balance is delicate and easy to be ruined ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.033$), if it continues like this, soon we will experience environmental disaster ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.997$). Allegations relating to the human right to rule and change nature have a lower annual average growth rate ($M = 3.10$ to 3.15)

A high score on this scale means an indication of a highly ecocentric attitude and in this case, the study shows that residents have ecocentric attitudes toward nature and this means they tend to be in harmony with nature in life and their activities.

Table 2.

Descriptive analysis of environmental attitudes of residents

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>M (Mean)</i>	<i>SD (St. Dev.)</i>
<i>T₁. Humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs.</i>	<i>3.10</i>	<i>1.609</i>
<i>T₂. When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences.</i>	<i>4.29</i>	<i>1.070</i>
<i>T₃. Human ingenuity will ensure that we do not make the earth unlivable.</i>	<i>3.80</i>	<i>1.157</i>
<i>T₅. The Earth has plenty of natural resources if we just learn how to develop them.</i>	<i>4.63</i>	<i>0.787</i>
<i>T₆. Plants and animals have as many rights as humans to exist.</i>	<i>4.72</i>	<i>0.723</i>
<i>T₇. Despite our special abilities, humans are still subject to the laws of nature.</i>	<i>4.40</i>	<i>0.904</i>
<i>T₈. The so-called "ecological crisis" facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated.</i>	<i>3.68</i>	<i>2.897</i>
<i>T₉. Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature.</i>	<i>3.15</i>	<i>1.413</i>
<i>T₁₀. The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset.</i>	<i>4.27</i>	<i>1.033</i>
<i>T₁₁. People learn enough about how nature works to be able to manage it.</i>	<i>3.63</i>	<i>1.096</i>
<i>T₁₂. If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe.</i>	<i>4.31</i>	<i>0.997</i>

The scale of measurement: 1- I Strongly disagree, 2- I disagree, 3- I neither agree nor disagree, 4- I agree, 5- I Strongly agree

Source: Author

Reliability is essential in any measurement scale and shows the homogeneity of instruments that comprise it. The reliability of this scale was explained by a Cronbach's Alfa in Table 3.

Table 3.**Reliability of measurement variable (Cronbach's Alpha)**

<i>The measurement scales</i>	<i>The number of indicators</i>	<i>Cronbach's Alpha (α)</i>
Environmental attitudes of residents	12	0.642

Source: Author

As seen from the data presented, the measurement scale for both variables has an acceptable level of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient which shows that the scales of measurement are reliable.

Conclusions

The tourism industry is one of the main branches of the economy in the study area and offers many development opportunities but in addition to the potential, there are also threats to damaging natural resources and tourist attractions. In response to this concern posed by the tourism industry, policies and strategies for development are geared toward sustainable tourism, where stakeholders aim to walk the path of holistic sustainability. Responsibility for sustainability is recognized as the responsibility of all tourism actors and the results suggest that residents are a key element in the planning and development of sustainable tourism.

Within this paradigm, residents play an important role, as the community can guide the action of the industry with their choices regarding the tourist offer and the care for the protection of natural resources.

Researchers in other countries have studied and continue to study people's environmental attitudes and how environmental attitudes affect human behavior, related to environmental issues. In the study area, it is important to know to clarify the problem of deteriorating natural resources that concerns all stakeholders affected by the development of the tourism industry.

Based on the descriptive analysis, using the survey data on the assessment of residents for the development of tourism and environmental attitudes of residents, using SPSS, a practical test is done to know the assessment of residents for the development of tourism and their environment. Conclusions are drawn as follows:

(1)Residents in Saranda and Ksamil appreciate the tourism development as a chaotic development.

(2)Residents in Saranda and Ksamil have ecocentric attitudes toward nature in general and the environment.

(3)For these reasons, businesses in Saranda and Ksamil, should not only veer their investments to future development without sacrificing the interests of the residents but also find appropriate tools and methods to guarantee the protection of the natural environment of the area.

(4)Central and local government institutions to improve policies and strategies for the successful management of the tourism industry in search of the right balance between economic growth and the protection of economic resources for today and future generations by emphasizing the good use of natural resources.

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