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## THE EXAMINATION OF THE RESIDENTS' ACTIVITIES AND DEDICATION TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY — AN AGRITOURISM ACCESS TO THE SUBJECT

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**Abstract:** The paper deals with conceptual guidelines, basic aspects and spatial frameworks of the development of agritourism. The holistic approach, in this regard, includes the integrated and the comprehensive aspects of tourist stays in the countryside. The authors define the impact of agritourism on rural surroundings and analyze the influence of spending leisure time outside urban areas and consuming agritourism activities. Understanding the many components of agritourism is essential for future planning, management, business decisions and strategies. For success in agritourism, knowledge is necessary in many economic fields, including organization, management and marketing, among others. In addition, this article emphasizes products and services in agritourism and provides insight into the facilities and opportunities that are offered to tourists in rural areas. The research findings represent a useful tool for obtaining information about many elements of agritourism development and can serve as a relevant instrument in travel industry research or in academic investigation.

**Key words:** agritourism, comprehensive frameworks, products and services, tourism impact

### Introduction

The effect of international processes on economic growth is reflected in the intensity and direction of tourism flows, as well as in the development of what is called special interest tourism. This term includes customized tourism activities,

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i.e., activities tailored to specific individual or group interests. In modern studies of the development of international tourist trends, agritourism has become increasingly relevant. This type of tourism currently has strong advantages on the international tourism market and has already played a key role in the rural development of some economically and socially depressed areas (Blaine, Mohammad, & Var, 1993; Sznajder, Przezborska, & Scrimgeour, 2009). It is an important segment of tourism in Europe, as evidenced by the 200,000 known registered service providers in agritourism on the continent, with more than 2,000,000 beds. The decrease of traditional subventions for agriculture has made agritourism an increasingly important form of diversification with which to support economically sustainable rural communities. In Serbia, as in many other countries, agritourism is an important factor for multifunctional rural development (Knickel & Renting, 2000; Yasuo, 2007). Knickel and Renting (2000) contend that “rural development consists of a wide variety of new activities, such as the production of high quality and region-specific products, nature conservation and landscape management, agritourism and the development of short supply chains. The number and variety of new activities is in reality, much larger” (p. 513). The purpose of this research is to examine how agritourism activities affect rural surroundings. The research objective, drawing on the study of Lankford and Howard (1994), is to test some aspects of the Tourism Impact Attitude Scale (TIAS scale) in order to examine the attitudes of residents (in this case from villages in Northern Serbia) toward tourism and its impact. To this end, descriptive statistics will be applied.

### **Agritourism — theoretical background**

There are many scientific theories and approaches to agritourism as an economic, social, cultural and psychological phenomenon. Although the notion of ‘agritourism’ or ‘farm tourism/farm-stay tourism’ can easily be defined as ‘tourism that takes place in an agrarian area’, this definition does not include the complexity of the activities and various types and notions that have appeared in different countries. Nickerson, Black and McCool (2001) stated that rural area is the basic resource for the development of agritourism and that this tourist activity relies on the city residents’ need for peace and outdoor space for recreation. Those authors also suggested that farm-stay and rural scenery are an inherent part of this tourist activity. However, agritourism is used more conventionally for notions that are related to tourist products and service, which is directly related to agrarian environment, agricultural products and types of farm-stay. Such activities involve staying in such an environment (in private accommodations or camping), educational visits, recreational activities or selling agricultural products and homemade products (Sznajder et al., 2009; Demirović,

Petrović, Neto Monteiro, & Stjepanović, 2016). Clarke (1996) explained that certain spatial differences can be found in agritourism. Namely, if the accommodation is not on the farm, then it is agritourism, while farm-stay means that the agricultural environment and its offerings are included in the product (e.g., being involved in agricultural work, riding a tractor, processing products, etc.). The problems in agricultural production have encouraged farmers and the creators of agricultural policy to seek alternative activities, of which agritourism is one (Illbery, Bowler, Clark, Crockett, & Shaw, 1998).

Many scientific studies are marked by confusion when it comes to defining and distinguishing agritourism from rural tourism. Some authors suggest that they are the same (Di Muzio, Dota, Faggioli, Manilla, & Tibiletti, 2000; Hall, Roberts, & Mitchell, 2003; Štetić, 2007). However, an absolute majority of statements (Sharpley, 2002; Canoves, Villarino, Priestley, & Blanco, 2004; Sznajder et al., 2009; George & Rilla, 2011; Poudel, 2012; Petrović, Vujko, & Blešić, 2015; Petrović, Bjeljic, & Demirović, 2016; Petrović, Blešić, Ivolga, & Vujko, 2016, Petrović, Blešić, Vujko, & Gajić, 2017) agree that agritourism is only a segment of rural tourism, together with cultural tourism, ecotourism, adventure tourism, hunting tourism, nautical tourism and other types of tourist activities in rural areas. Based on the above, the Figure 1 proposes a graphical classification of this terminology.

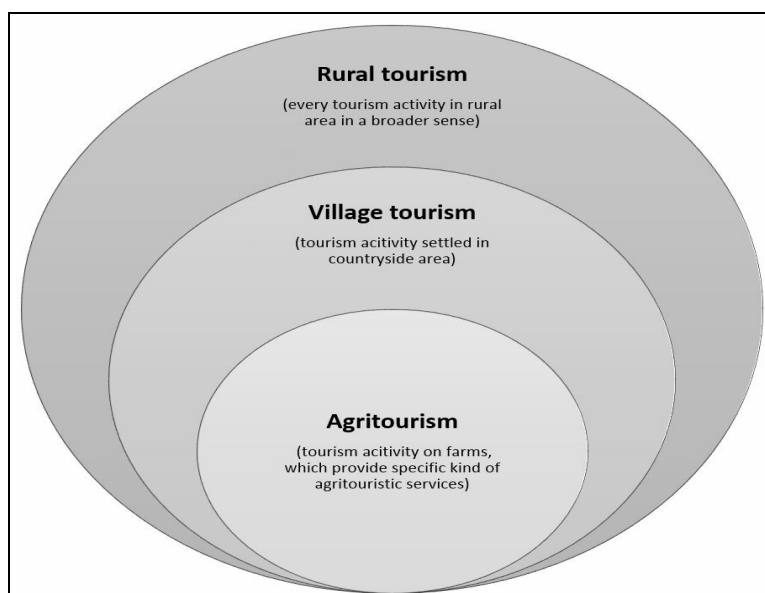


Figure 1. The relationship between rural tourism, village tourism and agritourism

Kušen (2007a; 2007b) opines that defining agritourism is a delicate matter because, as noted, it is often confused with rural tourism. The author claimed that references to agritourism are frequently a marketing ploy intended to achieve better economic results. Together with this, the same author also considers agritourism to be a segment of rural tourism although he points out that the two notions are synonymous in scientific papers. The author concluded that it is in the interest of the development of agritourism, village tourism and rural tourism that order should be made in the terminology in scientific and normative practice.

The concept of agritourism is designed in such a way that more segments of local economy could profit from the tourist activities it offers. In this context, the Figure 2 divides agritourism subjects into four groups.

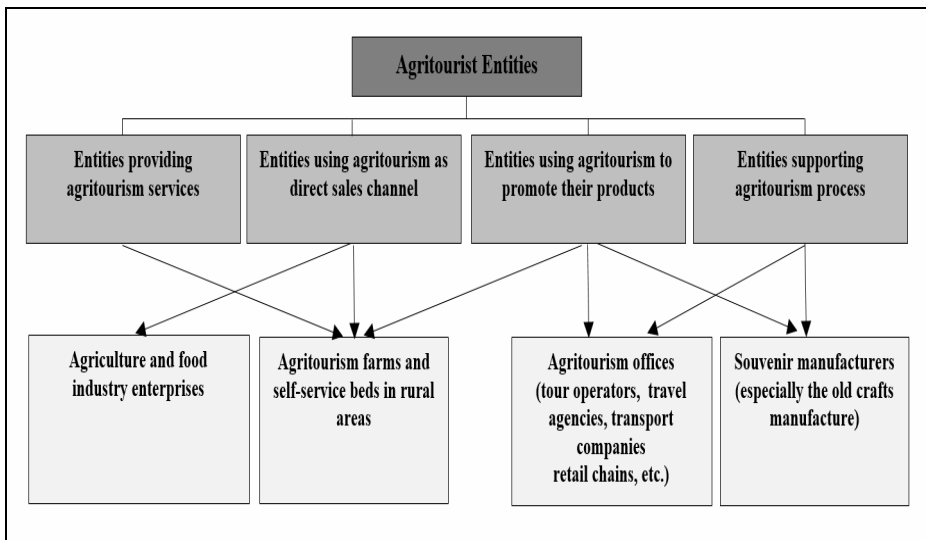


Figure 2. Classification of agritourist entities (Source: Adapted according to Sznajder et al., 2009)

The first group comprises those entities that directly provide agritourist products and services: farm-stay accommodations and self-service beds in rural areas. The second group is made up of subjects that use agritourism for direct sales of their products, which also include companies from the food industry (milling and bakery, dairy production, meat-processing etc.). The third group consists of persons who promote their products through agritourism, which can relate to all the subjects mentioned. And finally, the fourth group contains entities that support agritourism processes but not by offering the specific products of this aspect of tourism. The most common examples are souvenir shops travel agencies, traffic and sales companies.

## **Methodology**

In order to measure tourism impact effects, Lankford and Howard (1994) presented a unique model for measuring tourism impact on the attitude of the local population (most often in rural tourism), called the Tourism Impact Attitude Scale – TIAS. The TIAS consisted originally of 27 dependent variables (Lankford & Howard, 1994, 130) and 15 independent variables (Lankford and Howard, 1994, 132). Since the main study, the TIAS has been used in the research mostly in economically developed countries, such as Canada (Rollins, 1997), the USA (Vesey & Dimanche, 2001; Harrill & Potts, 2003; Wang, Pfister, & Morais, 2006; Wang & Pfister, 2008; Woosnam, 2012), China and Japan (Schneider, Lankford, & Oguchi, 1997) and Taiwan (Lankford, J. S. Y. Chen, & W. Chen, 1994). For this reason, it will be highly challenging to test TIAS in the conditions of Serbia (Vojvodina Province in northern part of the country). Bearing in mind that the country under observation has specific economic, geographical and sociological aspects, this study should open options for future application of the measure for the whole region. Until now, the closest regions to be observed by means of the TIAS were Western Serbia (Blešić, Pivac, Besermenji, Ivkov-Džigurski, & Košić, 2014) and Slovakia (Sabolova, 2013). In this respect, it is highly important to examine the coherence between tourism impacts and locals and to work to improve them. A 5-point Likert scale (from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”) was used for measuring the elements.

In order to explore the impact of agritourism on the attitude of locals in selected villages, descriptive statistics were applied to the responses of 228 local residents. All the interested respondents in the observed 17 villages participated in the survey. The only condition was that their domicile address was in the researched villages. The poll was anonymous, i.e. the names of the examinees were not relevant for the selected data. The examination of the target groups was done with the technique “face to face”. Data were processed using SPSS 18.0. Descriptive statistical analysis represents the basic measure, which is used to explain the observed sample according to the obtained results. Analysis was used to calculate mean scores for the items and for the determinants of the scale that was used (Pallant, 2011). By employing this method, data can be presented in the form of number of cases, percentages and frequencies, and measures of general tendencies (e.g., mode and median).

## Results and discussion

The questionnaire used for the research included 12 of the original independent variables of the TIAS scale (translated and adapted for Serbian respondents). In all, the 12 independent indicators of tourism impacted on the attitudes and behavior of residents in rural areas. In the original scale, socio-demographic variables appeared first, followed by the 12 variables of the TIAS. However, in this section of the paper, we will present the scores obtained according to the number of the scales. The structure of the examinees considering their dedication to the local community and their activities/habits in the community will be presented in this section in detail.

Table 1. Structure of the examinees considering their dedication to the local community (N=228)

Variables	<i>f</i>	%	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>X</i>
<b>Live in this area</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
I moved to this area	31	13.6	5	5
I was born in this area	197	86.4	4	5
<b>Knowledge of main industries in this area</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
No	57	25.0	5	5
Partly	20	8.8	5	5
Yes	151	66.2	3	5
<b>Member of local community organization</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
No	96	42.1	5	5
Yes	132	57.9	5	5
<b>Able to influence tourism decision making</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
Completely disagree	82	36.0	5	5
Disagree	22	9.6	4	5
I do not have any opinion / I do not know	28	12.3	5	4
Agree	42	18.4	5	3
Absolutely agree	54	23.7	4	4
<b>Perception of rate of growth of community</b>			<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
Completely disagree	92	40.4	3	4
Disagree	32	14.0	4	4
I do not have any opinion / I do not know	40	17.5	3	5
Agree	24	10.5	4	5
Absolutely agree	40	17.5	4	4
<b>Kilometers live from the nearest town center</b>			<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Extremely low value (distance is more than 15 km)	22	9.6	4	5
Low value (distance is between 12 and 14 km)	20	8.8	5	4
Middle value (distance is between 9 and 11 km)	24	10.5	3	4
High value (distance is between 6 and 8 km)	62	27.2	4	5
Very high value (distance is less than 5 km)	100	43.9	5	5

The results from the Table 1 classify the respondents according to their scores for the statement “Live in this area”. This is based on the criterion of whether they migrated to the observed local area or were born in it. The results indicate

that significantly more respondents were born in the observed area (86.4%) than moved there (13.6%). Just as no significant difference in attitudes toward tourism development was found in the past between migrants and natives (Goudy, 1977; Patton & Stabler, 1979; Ayers & Potter, 1989), here too this factor does not appear to be relevant.

Division of the respondents according to their scores for the statement “Knowledge of main industries in this area” shows that the majority of examinees (66.2%) are familiar with the types of economic branches in their villages and surroundings. This means that about three out of ten respondents (33.8%) are not familiar or are partially familiar with them. It has been shown that knowledge of tourism and other economic branches in the local community contributes to better understanding of the benefits that tourism can bring and the ways in which it should be used to the greatest advantage (Davis et al., 1988). This research supports the thesis as the results indicate a large share of positive answers.

Division of the respondents according to their scores for the statement “Member of a local association / organization” indicates that 57.9% of the sample are members and 42.1% are not. According to these results, a slightly larger percentage of respondents are members and thus potential facilitators of tourism development and profit from tourism in their settlements. It is likely that when residents are more involved in local association work, with the power to legislate regulations, develop strategies and make other important decisions on the local level, they more strongly support tourist development and changes engendered by such activity. Those claims have been substantiated in several scientific studies (Napier & Wright, 1974; Rosentraub & Thompson, 1981; Allen & Gibson, 1987; Ayers & Potter, 1989).

Division of the respondents according to their scores for the statement “Able to influence tourism decision making” indicates that almost one-half of the total number of respondents (45.6%) absolutely or partially have no influence on making decisions about tourism development in their local area. An almost equal share completely or partially agrees that they have an influence on making decisions (42.1%). Since making decisions that support tourist in a specific destination depends directly on the level of participation of the local population (Cooke, 1982), the sample results partially support this thesis. Thus, it can be easily concluded that when residents are more involved in making decisions, creating plans, strategies and other necessary tourist elements on the local level, they support tourist development and the changes made due to such activity are felt much more strongly. Similar conclusions were found in a number of

previous studies (Goudy, 1977; Rosentraub & Thompson 1981; Allen & Gibson, 1987; Ayers & Potter, 1989).

Division of the respondents according to their scores for the statement “Perception of rate of growth of community” suggested that four out of ten respondents (40.4%) did not have the impression that the community was growing in number (40.4%). If some of those who partially did not agree is added, the percentage of respondents who reacted negatively to this statement reaches 54.4%. On the other side, slightly more than one quarter of the respondents (28) replied that they completely or partially agree with the given statement. In this case, the percentage of respondents with no opinion about this variable (17.5%) is important. It may be interpreted as a lack of interest in this demographic issue or perhaps a lack of understanding of the question. In several previous researches (Patton & Stabler, 1979; Albrecht & Geersten 1982; Greider & Krannich, 1985), it was shown that a feeling that a local community is growing in number has a positive impact on residents' attitudes towards tourism and tourist development. In the rural settlements in this study, this statement was partially refuted.

Division of the respondents according to their scores for the statement “Residence in kilometers live from the nearest town center” shows that 162 chose very high or high values, i.e., they live near a town up to 8 km away (71.1%). On average, every 10th respondent (10.5%) lives mid-distance from a town center. The longest distances record the results where respondents chose low or extremely low values, i.e., distances greater than 12 km (18.4%). The research conducted in many countries clearly show that residents who live further from tourist events and resorts are more indifferent to tourism in comparison to those who live in close proximity (Sheldon & Var, 1984; Tyrrell & Spaulding, 1984; Murphy & Andressen, 1988). On the other hand, Korça (1998) claimed that local populations not living in parts of a settlement where tourism is most intensive support its development more strongly than those who live in those parts. According to the findings, it can be assumed that the research by Korça, in this case, is more justified. In other words, in areas where tourism is very intensive, it is more likely that residents will be less supportive of such development because of the everyday pressures and intensive impact that tourism has on their everyday lives and habits.



Table 2. Structure of the examinees considering their activities/habits in the community (N=228)

Variables	<i>f</i>	%	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>X</i>
<b>Spend leisure time in outdoor recreation</b>			<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
No	20	8,8	4	5
Partly	29	12,7	4	5
Yes	179	78,5	4	4
<b>Employed in a job related to tourism</b>			<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
Completely disagree	67	29,4	5	4
Disagree	41	18,0	5	4
I do not have any opinion / I do not know	14	6,1	4	5
Agree	9	3,9	3	5
Absolutely agree	97	42,5	4	4
<b>Reduced quality of outdoor recreation</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>
Completely disagree	130	57,0	5	4
Disagree	13	5,7	3	4
I do not have any opinion / I do not know	54	23,7	5	4
Agree	11	4,8	4	5
Absolutely agree	20	8,8	5	5
<b>Frequently visit other tourist areas</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
Never (0)	30	13,2	5	5
Very rarely (1-2)	41	18,0	5	4
Rarely (3-4)	25	11,0	5	5
Often (5-6)	74	32,5	4	4
Very often (7 or more)	58	25,4	5	5
<b>Frequently talk with tourists in this area</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
No	87	38,2	5	5
Yes	141	61,8	5	5
<b>Have formed friendships with tourists</b>			<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
No	137	60,1	5	5
Yes	91	39,9	5	5

According to the results from the Table 2 in relation to the reactions of respondents to the statement “Spend leisure time in the outdoor recreation”, it can be seen that on average, almost eight out of 10 examinees (78.5%) spend their free time in this way (outdoor recreational and sport activities). The remaining 21.5% do not spend or partially spend their free time in the observed activities (21.5%). In this regard, Perdue, Long, and Allen (1987) showed that in areas where tourism has a negative impact on the opportunities of residents to engage freely in their outdoor activities, the attitude towards tourism is significantly negative. According to the results in this study, it seems that tourism has not yet had a significant impact on this segment of life and everyday activities of the residents.

Partition of the respondents according to their scores for the statement “Employed in a job related to tourism” indicates that almost half of the

respondents (46.4%) completely or partially agree that their vocational activity is connected to tourism. This result leads to the conclusion that almost one-half of the respondents in the observed rural areas in Northern Serbia are engaged in jobs which are directly (agritourist service providers) or indirectly (old craft producers, agricultural product sellers etc.) connected with agritourism. This leaves a slightly larger share of respondents (47.4%) whose profession (for now) absolutely or partially has no connection with tourism. Respondents' share of 6.1% does not have an opinion about this statement. Several previous studies (Pizam & Pokela 1985; Liu & Var 1986; Milman & Pizam 1988) showed conclusively that residents who are employed in activities directly or indirectly connected with tourism perceive tourism development in a better light and have more positive attitudes towards it. Following such claims, it can be concluded that the situation based on the results of this study is only partially in favor of tourism development. The priority of local authorities should be to generate support for the establishment of more citizens' associations in the villages in order to improve tourism, and also to encourage membership of larger numbers of residents in such organizations.

Division of the respondents according to their scores for the statement "Reduced quality of outdoor recreation" shows that more than half of the respondents (57%) think that tourism has not affected this social segment, while the number of those who completely or partially agree with this statement is significantly smaller (13.6%). It is important note that almost one quarter of the respondents (23.7%) did not express an opinion about this statement. This may indicate that they, especially older people, did not understand the formulation of the statement sufficiently and it should be partially modified for further studies. The previous research have shown that in areas where tourism has had a negative effect on residents' opportunities to engage in their recreational activities outdoors, the attitude towards tourism is significantly negative (Perdue et al., 1987). This should be taken into account when considering the mass arrival of visitors to rural areas.

Partition of the examinees according to their scores for the statement "Frequently visit other tourist areas" indicates that one quarter of those polled visit other tourist destinations very often, almost every third respondent visit often (32.5%), and a similar percentage (29%) rarely or very rarely go to other destinations (29%). While this last figure is unsettling, indicating that as many as 30 examinees never visit other destinations, it is actually a relatively small share of respondent sample (13.2%). This datum is important because traveling to other destinations often contributes to a better understanding of tourist

development and of the changes it can bring to local communities (Brougham & Butler, 1981).

Division of the respondents according to their scores for the statement “Frequently talk with tourists in this area” indicates that on average, six out of 10 respondents talk to visitors (61.8%). The percentage of those who do not interact with visitors is also significant (38.2%). As Brougham and Butler (1981) stated, the local population perceives the development and impact of tourism better when they have more opportunities to talk to visitors and in this way, they also reduce potential cultural and mental differences. Working on this thesis, it can be concluded that in the case of the villages that were researched, the situation in this respect is satisfactory.

Division of the examinees according to their scores for the statement “Have formed friendships with tourists” is similar to the previous variable but in reverse. In this case, on average, six out of 10 examinees did not make friends with visitors (60.1%), while the other 39.9% did. Such results clearly indicate that in the observed villages, verbal interactions between respondents and visitors centered much more on courteous small talk and significantly less on longer lasting communication that could turn into closer interpersonal relations. According to Brougham and Butler (1981), local populations perceive the development and impact of tourism better when relations between visitors and hosts are closer. In the case of this study, it can be stated that the organization of tourist arrivals and communications with visitors has been amiss in some areas of the stay with the hosts.

## **Conclusion**

The structure of the examinees considering their dedication to the local community and their activities/habits in the community has been presented in this study, with the aim to give a contribution through an analysis and overview from agritourism aspect. The research succeeds this goal implementing partially the TIAS Scale. The descriptive statistics are used for the analysis of the gathered data about interconnections of the sets of variables, comparing with the findings of the similar research. At the same time, it has been the focus of paper that analyzed the methodology and the results obtained earlier compared with the findings of this study. The results show that significantly more respondents were born in the observed area (86.4%) and mainly support agritourism development. Together with this, the majority of examinees (66.2%) are familiar with the types of economic branches in their villages and the surroundings, which contribute to better understanding of the economic, cultural, social and

other benefits that tourism can bring to them. In addition, the findings indicate that it is likely that when residents are more involved in local association work, with the power to local regulations, develop strategies and make other important decisions on the local level, they more strongly support developing changes.

On the other hand, results show that respondents have lack of interest in topic such as “Perception of rate of growth of community” or perhaps a lack of understanding of the sentence, although some earlier studies proofed that a feeling that a local community is growing in number has a positive impact on residents' attitudes towards tourist development. In the observed rural settlements, this statement was only partially refuted. When it comes to the scores for the statement “Residence in kilometers live from the nearest town center” results show that in areas where tourism is very intensive, it is more likely that residents will be less supportive of such development because of the everyday pressures and intensive impact that tourism has on their everyday lives and habits.

Further findings indicate that examinees, who are employed in activities (in)directly connected with tourism, perceive tourism development in a better light and have more positive attitudes towards it. The priority of local authorities should be to generate support for the establishment of more citizens' associations in the villages in order to improve tourism, and also to encourage membership of larger numbers of residents in such organizations. Results also point to the conclusion that the residents who have traveled to other destinations contribute to a better understanding of tourist development and of the changes it can bring to their communities. Similar to these results, it can be stated that the local population perceives the development and impact of tourism better when they have more opportunities to talk to visitors and form friendships with them. With all these matters, our research emphasizes the finding that the higher the general opinion and attitude of an individuals and the community on tourist development in their local surroundings are, the higher is the concern about the same community.

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