

Residents Attitudes towards Tourism Development: A Case Study of Niasar, Iran

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Abstract: Tourism is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. It is an increasingly important source of income, employment and wealth in many countries. Its rapid expansion has, however, had detrimental environmental (and socio-cultural) impacts in many regions. The current study investigates the perceptions of residents in a Niasar, where tourism is not well developed although the area has great potential for further development. Using stratified proportionate random sampling technique and based on cocran sampling methodology. The study was carried out with field research approach and the validity of research tool was obtained by idea of experts and for reliability of questionnaires a pilot test was conducted. Cronbach Alpha coefficient of higher than 0.7 showed that research tool is reliable. Descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency, percentage, factor analysis and regression were used to data analysis. The result of factor analysis showed that four factors named as Economic impacts, Social and cultural impacts, Environmental impacts, Developmental and other issues explained 76.21% of variance of perceptions of residents. Results showed that Responder have positive perception to tourism. Liner regression analysis indicated that 76% of variation in perceptions of residents was determined by the four variables.

Key words: Residents perceptions, rural areas, tourism development

INTRODUCTION

Any country wants to increase life quality, clear or mitigate regional disparity and keep sustainable development in rural areas. Developing tourism sites of all kinds for economic and commercial use has increased during last decades. One way to make rural regions more attractive and help solving problems agriculture businesses are various forms of rural tourism. That is an alternative way of agricultural business, which may be useful to the return to profitability, increase in competitiveness of agriculture and new job creation. The article describes the role of rural tourism within sustainable development of rural areas.

Tourism has received considerable attention in the last decades because of its potential for regional economic development (Barucci and Becheri, 1990; Christaller, 1964; Friedmann, 1966). This is more evident in communities where the economy is highly dependent on agrarian declining activities and has limited alternatives for economic growth (Wanhill, 1997). In the literature, it is generally accepted that in the initial stage of tourism development the investigation of residents perceptions is essential (Allen *et al.*, 1993; Ap and Crompton, 1998; Maddox, 1985; Murphy, 1983).

Tourism was providing economic benefits to villagers in rural village communities, although, the level of this economic benefit varied immensely within the studies. For example substantial economic benefits had brought

some rural regional (Burlo, 1996; Christ, 1998; Eghtner, 1999; Rodriquez, 1999).

As Butler *et al.* (1998) note economic and social forces operating at the global level are determining both the nature and form of the rural landscape and how we value and use it. These changes, coupled with new ideas and approaches to leisure and recreation time are encouraging tourism development in rural areas at an ever increasing pace (Williams and Lawson, 2001; Reid *et al.*, 2000). Perceptions and attitudes of residents towards tourism are particularly important for the future success of the tourism industry. If residents perceive tourism in a negative way, it will be likely for tourist enterprises to confront with considerable obstacles in the establishment and the operation. Taking into consideration the above remarks, this article seeks it examines the attitudes and concerns of residents in a Niasar district where tourism is in the initial stages of development.

A resident attitude toward tourism, and more specifically perceptions of tourism impacts, has been a subject of research for more than 30 years. Jafari (1986) noted that tourism research focused on the positive aspects of tourism impacts in the 1960s, the negative aspects in the 1970s, and a more balanced, systematic approach in the 1980s. What has been seen in the past decade is a micro approach: the study of residents at the community level. Attitudes toward tourism studies have often been conducted in rural communities as many of these places struggle with economic viability. Early

studies on resident attitudes toward tourism had a tourism impact focus. They usually included either a series of questionnaire items related to several types of impacts (Liu and Var, 1986) or focused specifically on social or environmental impacts (Ap, 1990; Brougham and Butler, 1981; Jurowski *et al.*, 1997; King *et al.*, 1993; Liu *et al.*, 1987; Milman and Pizam, 1988; Um and Crompton, 1987).

Others have taken a tourism attitudes or tourism perceptions approach, considering the attitudes of a community residents toward tourism (Allen *et al.*, 1993; Gilbert and Clark, 1997; Johnson *et al.*, 1994; Lankford, 1994; Lankford and Howard, 1994; Lindberg and Johnson, 1997; Perdue *et al.*, 1987; Long *et al.*, 1990; McCool and Martin, 1994; Siegel and Jakus, 1995; Snaith and Haley, 1995). Most studies revealed, overall, that residents have positive attitudes toward tourism. When asked their feelings about the economic, sociocultural, and environmental aspects of tourism, residents felt that tourism brings about benefits. Residents generally reported positive attitudes regarding tourism and economic improvement, more recreation and park opportunities, improved quality of life (McCool and Martin, 1994; Perdue *et al.*, 1990), improved appearance (Perdue *et al.*, 1990), encouragement of cultural activities (McCool and Martin, 1994), and other items.

Most studies thus far have not found residents to be greatly concerned about the negative aspects of tourism on a general level. Other studies reported resident concern with crime (King *et al.*, 1993; Lankford, 1994; Lindberg and Johnson, 1997; Mok *et al.*, 1991), litter (Lankford, 1994; Snaith and Haley, 1995), drugs (King *et al.*, 1993; Mok *et al.*, 1991), crowding of public facilities and resources (Lindberg and Johnson, 1997; McCool and Martin, 1994), increased vandalism (Liu *et al.*, 1987), degradation of morality (Mok *et al.*, 1991).

From an economic point of view tourism development is a chance for a region's inhabitants to improve their personal income. However, it is also true that this development implies strong pressure on the environment. For this reason, new development policies must keep in mind residents' attitudes and opinions to tourism, since they perceive the environmental deterioration as opposed to the economic development that goes hand in hand with tourism. In this line, different studies have revealed the existence of clusters of residents with strong environmental concerns and a significantly negative opinion of tourism that can affect the formulation of new tourism policies (Aguilo and Rossello, 2005; Ap and Crompton, 1998; Davis *et al.*, 1988; Fredline and Faulkner, 2000; Madrigal, 1995; Ryan and Montgomery, 1994; Williams and Lawson, 2001). It has been widely recognized that tourism development is a double-edged sword for host communities. Not only does it generate benefits, but it also imposes costs (Jafari, 2001).

To reach main purpose of this study, following objectives were assumed:

- To identify respondents' socio, economic characteristics
- To identify and prioritize attitude of resident toward effect of tourism in rural
- Investigation effective factors on Residents attitudes towards tourism development.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was carried out in Niasar district, in Iran at 2010. This research attempted to identify the relationships between residents socio-economic and demographic attributes and their attitudes toward tourism, which is in the preliminary stage in the study site. To examine residents attitudes toward tourism in Niasar, the researchers adopted 20 statements and built a 20-item, five-point Likert-type response format based on the following scale: (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree). The questionnaire was prepared following a review of existing literature dealing with residents perceptions towards tourism (Akis *et al.*, 1996; Andriotis and Vaughan, 2003; Johnson *et al.*, 1994; Madrigal, 1995). For the analysis of data the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. The study was carried out with field research approach and the validity of research tool was obtained by idea of experts and for reliability of questionnaires a pilot test was conducted. Cronbach Alpha coefficient of higher than 0.7 showed that research tool is reliable. Descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequency, percentage, factor analysis and regression were used to data analysis

RESULTS

Demographic characteristics: Table 1 presents the main socio-demographic characteristics of the sample. Men and women were almost equally distributed. The respondents belonged to the age groups 15-30 (23, 1%), 31-45 (24, 6%), 46-60 (30, 8%) and many of them had received elementary and secondary education (22.2 and 28.5%, respectively). In addition to these, the majority of respondents were farmers (48.46%) and worker (24.6%).

In this study exploratory factor analysis with data reduction approach was employed. The main objective of this technique is to classify a large number of variables into a small number of factors based on relationships among variables. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to assess the dimensionality of the 28 items. Kaiser overall measure of sampling adequacy is 0.77 (Table 2), indicating that the data are appropriate for the principal components model. Values of 0.6 and above are

Table 1: Socio- demographic characteristics of the sample

		n	%
Gender:	Male		88.46
	Female		1.54
	Total	120	100
Age	15-30		23.1
	31-45		24.6
	46-60		30.8
	>60		21.5
	Total	120	100
Education	Illiterate		12.8
	Elementary		32.3
	Secondary		38.5
	Higher		15.4
	Total	120	100
Occupation	Farmers		48.46
	Worker		24.62
	Driver		7.69
	Employee		15.28
	Others		2.85
	Total	120	100

Table 2: KMO measure and Bartlett test to assess appropriateness of the data for factor analysis

Bartlett test of sphericity		
KMO	Approx. chi-square	Sig.
0.771	7911.717	0.000

Field survey (2010)

required for a good factor analysis (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1983).

Table 4: Factor analysis with varimax rotation

Factor	sItems	Factor loading
Economic impacts	Tourism has a positive impact on local income	0.717
	Tourism has improved employment opportunities in the area	0.851
	The tourism sector will continue to play a major role in the economy of the community.	0.876
	Tourism attracts investment and spending in the area	0.923
	Prices of goods and services in the area have increased because of the tourism there	0.834
	Tourist enterprises of the area must belong only to the local people	0.756
	Shopping opportunities are better in my community as a result of tourism	0.912
Social and cultural impacts	Tourism has a negative impact on social mores of the residents	0.947
	More important benefits of tourism is how it can improve the local standard of living.	0.877
	Local recreation programs have expanded due to the infl ux of tourist in my community.	0.712
	Tourism sector provides many desirable employment opportunities for residents.	0.897
	My community has better roads due to tourism	0.784
	Tourism has led to an increase of criminality in the area	0.955
	Meeting tourists from other regions is a positive experience for the local people	0.889
	Tourism can strengthen the cultural events of the area	0.944
	Tourism gives more benefits to foreigners than to local people	0.911
Tourism provides an incentive for local people to stay in the area	0.834	
Environmental impacts	Tourism is the major cause of the illegal construction of buildings in the area	0.893
	Tourism has a negative impact on the natural environment of the area	0.884
	Tourism leads to overcrowded places in the area	0.773
	Tourism provides an incentive for the conservation of the historical, cultural and traditional buildings of the area	0.888
	Tourism has a negative impact on the quality of my life	0.701
	Tourism has reduced the quality of outdoor recreation opportunities in my community.	0.923
Developmental and other issues	The benefits of tourism outweigh its negative impacts	0.879
	Other places in the region have a higher degree of tourism development	0.799
	The public sector must provide incentives to the people of the area in order to develop more tourist activity	0.812
	Adjacent areas to the municipality in which I live must attract more tourist activity	0.804
	It is important to develop plans to manage the growth of tourism.	0.915

Table 3: Number of extracted factors, eigenvalues and variance explained by each factor

Factors	Eigenvalue	% of variance	Cumulative % of variance
1	7.073	27.67	27.67
2	5.724	21.32	48.99
3	3.125	17.44	66.43
4	2.892	9.78	76.21

Field survey (2010)

An examination of the scree plots derived from principal component analysis with oblique rotation indicated that four factors were appropriate for these data. These four factors explained 76.21% of the variance in attitudes toward tourism.

The Table 3 shows all the factors extractable from the analysis along with their Eigen values, the percent of variance of the factor and the previous factors. In present study, 33 components were significantly loaded into nine factors. Eigenvalues drive the variances explained by each factor. Sum of squares of factor's loadings (eigenvalue) indicates the relative importance of each factor in accounting for the variance associated with the set of variables being analyzed. These factors explained 76.21% of total variance that the first factor accounts for 27.67% of the variance, the second 21.32%, the third 17.44% and the fourth 9.78%. The varimax rotated factor analysis is shown in Table 3. In determining

Table 5: Correlation between selected dependent variables with Residents attitudes towards tourism development

Variable entered	r	p
Age	-0/604*	0/017
Income	0/534*	0/040
Education	0/553*	0/032
Length of residence	-0/627*	0/001

*: r is significant at 5% level of probability; **: r is significant at 1% level of probability

Table 6: Linear regression for prediction of Residents attitudes towards tourism development

Variables	Coefficient of regression (B).	β	t-value	Sig.
Constant	-0.639		-5/738	0/00
Age	0/099	0/600	8/279	0/00
Income	0/080	0/380	6/301	0/00
Education	0/009	0/316	4/971	0/00
Length of residence	0/060	0/272	4/402	0/00

*: r is significant at 5% level of probability; **: r is significant at 1% level of probability

factors, factor loadings greater than 0.50 were considered as to be significant. As anticipated, the first factor accounts for 27.67% of variance and 7 variables were loaded significantly. These variables were presented in Table 4. A relevant name for this on loading's pattern is economic impact Eigen value of this factor is 7.073, which is placed at the first priority among the effects of tourism. The second factor is associated mostly with the variables related to social and cultural aspect. Thus this factor can be named as social and cultural impacts The eigenvalue for this factor is 5.724 which explain 21.32 percent of the total variance. The name assigned to the third factor is environmental impacts This factor with eigenvalue of 3.125 explains 17.44% of the total variance of effects of tourism. The fourth factor contains 5 variables relating to developmental and other issues These variables explain 9.78% of total variance.

Correlation between selected dependent variables with residents attitudes towards tourism development: The Pearson coefficient of correlation was used to identify correlation between selected dependent variables with Residents attitudes towards tourism development. The relationship between some selected dependent variables with Residents attitudes towards tourism development is presented in Table 5. There was a significant relationship found between age, income, education and length of residence with Residents attitudes towards tourism development.

Linear regressions for prediction of residents attitudes towards tourism development: Linear regression was used for prediction of Residents attitudes towards tourism development. Stepwise regression analysis indicated that 76% ($R^2 = 0.761$) of variation in Residents attitudes towards tourism development was determined by four

variables: age, income, education, length of residence. Regression coefficients for the accepted variables are shown in Table 6. The relationship is described in the following formula:

$$Y = -0.639 + 0.099X_1 + 0.08 X_2 + 0.009X_3 + 0.060X_4$$

CONCLUSION

Results of this study indicated that residents have positive perception toward tourism. Regression analysis indicated that 76% of variation in Residents attitudes towards tourism development was determined by the four variables of age, income, education and length of residence. In light of this, the resident attitude survey serves as a tool to assist the community in making informed decisions about tourism-related issues. The following points highlight the main findings from the survey to help provide a context of tourism development potential in Niasar district. Overall, residents of Niasar express support for local tourism development. Respondents believe that tourism should have a role in the local economy at least equal to other industries. Similarly, respondents showed considerable agreement about the advantages of increased tourism (jobs and economic growth), as well as tourism positive influence on quality of life.

More specifically, the residents of the Niasar community under study perceived tourism in a positive way because of its beneficial impacts on the local economy. Residents also expressed some concerns for the negative impacts of tourism on the environment. These concerns do not come as a surprise since an environmental awareness, associated with tourism activity, stands in a high degree in many local communities (Kousis, 2000; Tsartas, 1992). However, the local authorities are necessary to make more efforts in order to inform local residents and visitors on the environmental.

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