

Original Article

Residents' perceptions of the economic impact of sports tourism. Differences according to the geographical location of the town

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Abstract:

Sports tourism has become a major tourist draw in recent decades. People are increasingly in favour of hosting such activities, given the many benefits it can bring to the community. The economic impact of such events is known but not the perceptions that residents have about this type of impact. Researchers also highlight the differences that the populations may have according to the geographical area where they are located and their influence on sports tourism activities. Therefore, the aim of the study is to investigate residents' perceptions of the economic impact of sports tourism according to the population of residence, differentiating between rural, urban and coastal populations. A total of 647 residents of Gran Canaria (Spain) completed a survey that analysed the residents' perceptions of the economic impact of sports tourism in the area. The results of this study indicate that residents have a high regard for the impacts associated with sports tourism and that perceptions do not vary greatly, depending on the population of residence of the respondents, as well as age and sex. Institutions responsible for planning and managing the sports tourism sector should pay attention to any relevant information provided, including residents' perceptions, to provide a better service to the sector.

Key words: sports tourism; economic impact; perceptions of residents; place of residence.

Introduction

The relationship between tourism and sports has increased in importance in recent years, becoming an academic field of study and an increasingly popular tourist attraction. On the other hand, the growth of tourism worldwide and the belief that it will be one of the most important industries for generations to come encourage attention to the impacts derived from the activity and the consequences it has for the communities receiving it (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Ma & Kaplanidou, 2017; Nunkoo, Gursoy & Juwaheer, 2010). Sports is also an integral part of the global culture and can be considered an independent activity, often linked to tourism to varying degrees (Singh, Dash & Vashko, 2016).

Most authors who provide a conceptual definition of the term "sports tourism" include in it the motivational component associated with the actualization of the trip (Hinch & Higham, 2001; Kurtzman, 2001). On the other hand, in sports matters, the tourist element acts as a reinforcement to the realization of the trip, despite the fact that sports are the main motivation for travel if we consider the analysis of individuals or groups of people who participate, either actively or passively, in competitive and/or recreational sports while travelling and/or staying in places outside their usual environment (Gammon & Robinson, 2003).

Given the complexity of this sector due to the large number of agents involved, mass tourism has been a cause for concern with respect to the possible growth and sustainability of destinations (Pastras & Bramwell 2013). In this way, it is essential that, for the correct planning and management of the activity, the bodies in charge of this task are aware of the effects that the agents involved (stakeholders) can have, representing the residents in the community as one of the most representative groups. Likewise, residents can be categorized as one of the agents involved as a fundamental part of the development of tourism activity. As Butler (1980) points out, a thorough explanation of the residents' reaction is a complex system because it is necessary to consider not only the characteristics of tourism but also the characteristics of the host community and the region itself. These can be found at different stages of the tourism life cycle, which requires differentiated product and market policies, which are adapted to the current situation of the community.

Different studies highlight that, in general, local residents have favourable attitudes towards tourism (Almeida-García, Balbuena-Vázquez & Cortés-Macías, 2015; Vargas-Sánchez, Porrás-Bueno & Plaza-Mejía, 2011). Even so, a deeper understanding from the resident's point of view is needed, which will allow the governments involved to plan more carefully for the future of tourism. As Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012) indicate, the impacts associated with tourism have usually been investigated from an economic perspective. In addition,

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they have had a notable impact on the relationship between tourism and sports, with an impact on the communities that carry out this type of activity. In economic terms, tourism takes the form of consumption of goods and services and thus provides a direct and indirect impact on employment and entrepreneurship opportunities within the sector. As Brookshire, Thayer and D'Arge (1982) indicate, the economic impacts on the locality focus on three main lines:

- 1- A direct impact in which it occurs with the purchase of a product or service.
- 2- An indirect impact on the industries that revolve around that service or product.
- 3- An induced impact in reference to the salaries and jobs generated by that service or product.

Brida, Disenga and Osti (2011) point out that the economic impact of tourism is perceived by residents from different points of view, both positive and negative. These impacts may affect employment generation, local economic development, increased investment or economic diversification (Diedrich & García-Buades, 2009; Incera & Fernández, 2015; Stylidis, 2016; Vargas-Sánchez et al. 2011), as well as improving the economic quality of the locality through the different revenues obtained (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Huh & Vogt 2008; Ouyang, Gursoy and Sharma, 2017; Sharma, Dyer, Carter & Gursoy, 2008). On the other hand, residents may perceive an increase in the price of goods and services, as well as in the cost of living, and an unequal distribution of the benefits obtained from tourism (Andriotis, 2005; Fredline, 2002; McDowall & Choi, 2010). Similarly, the impacts of tourism on the locality are translated into an improvement in infrastructure and facilities (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf & Vogt, 2005), which translates into an increase in the quality of life of residents (Oviedo-García, Castellanos-Verdugo & Martín-Ruiz, 2008), so it appears that tourism activity has a global effect on the host populations (Kim, Uysal & Sirgy, 2013; Singh et al., 2016). In turn, the development of tourism can increase the cost of living (Bujosa-Bestard & Rosselló-Nadal, 2007; Látková & Vogt, 2012; Rasoolimanesh, Jaafar, Kock & Ramayah, 2015), affect the seasonality of work and unemployment (Bujosa-Bestard & Roselló-Nadal, 2007), and increase price inflation (Deery & Jago, 2005).

However, not everyone in a host community perceives the impacts of tourism in the same way. González-García, Parra, Calabuig & Añó (2016) suggest that the opinions, beliefs, and expectations resulting from tourism may be quite different depending on the general population or particular group analysed. Bartolomé, Ramos & Rey-Maqueira, 2009 point out that the impact of tourism on communities depends on the type of tourism practised (individual, group, itinerant, etc.), the purpose of the trip (cultural, sun and beach, rural, or adventure), as well as the level of economic development of the locality that hosts the tourist activity. Tourism activity, particularly physical activity and sports, has significant potential to enrich the lives of community residents.

The economic impacts associated with active sports tourism have had a notable impact on the relationship between direct and indirect impacts (Gursoy, Chi and Dyer, 2010; Kurtzman, 2005; Nunkoo & Ramkisson, 2012; Salgado-Barandela, Barajas, Lera-López & Sánchez-Fernández, 2013), with an impact on the communities that carry out this type of activity. These impacts are also influenced by other factors specific to each community. Among them, the influence of some socio-demographic characteristics on residents' perceptions, such as the distance from the residence to the tourist area (Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015; Vargas-Sánchez et al., 2011) or their level of contact with tourists (Andereck et al., 2005; Wang & Pfister, 2008), stand out. In addition, the influence of other more specific socio-demographic characteristics on residents' perceptions of tourism, such as the degree of tourism concentration in the area, may affect the perceptions that residents have of tourism (Hao, Long & Kleckley, 2011).

Accordingly, there may be differences in the perceptions of impacts associated with tourist activity among different geographical areas of residence (Ashworth & Page, 2011, Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). On the one hand, rural communities can use tourism as a development tool for revitalizing declining traditional industries (Jaafar & Rasoolimanesh, 2015), providing residents with a means to gain economic and social benefits (Iorio & Corsale, 2010). Rural tourism benefits the local community by providing traditional sectors of the population with an additional source of income and the opportunity to enhance their heritage symbols or identity (Hall, 2004, Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015; Iorio & Corsale, 2010).

On the other hand, in urbanized areas, tourism activity is identified as an external phenomenon, and these are fully integrated into the daily activities of the locality (Ashworth & Page, 2011) due to the multitude of options, mainly leisure, offered by this type of environment (Hritz & Ross, 2010), sometimes designed specifically to attract tourists (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2015). Therefore, residents could favour the development and improvement of services in the urban environment (transports, infrastructure, events, etc.). However, for urban tourist destinations, tourism is not necessarily a major driver of the local economy (Ashworth & Page, 2011), so residents may perceive little tangible benefit from the activity.

In general, tourism plays an important role in island economies, so both islands and archipelagos pose unique challenges for tourism policy. However, mass tourism has been of concern regarding the possible growth and sustainability of these destinations (Bramwell 2011). Island governments and tourism stakeholders have recognized the role that the tourism industry can play in economic diversification, overcoming isolation and peripheral constraints with a particular emphasis on job creation (Lim and Patterson, 2008). The development of tourism is an important factor in explaining the economic performance of island economies. As Seetanah (2011)

points out, tourism plays a relatively important role in the growth of island economies, confirming the fact that the development of tourism in island economies may have comparatively higher growth effects.

The Canarian Community is a Spanish autonomous community that receives a greater influx of tourists throughout the year. Statistics from recent years show how the number of visitors continues to increase. According to the data published by FRONTUR ISTAC (2017), the total number of visitors to the Canary Islands in 2016 was 13,114,359 tourists. According to data from IMPACTUR (2016), in its study on the socio-economic impact of tourism in the Canary Islands, tourism activity represents 34.20% of the total GDP (20.90% of direct effects and 13.40% of indirect effect), which is equivalent to 14,602 million euros. This represents 39.70% of community employment (29.20% direct effect and 10.50% indirect effect). If branches of activity are taken into account, 6.30% of tourism employment is generated through recreational, cultural and sports activities. The community's tourism investment in cultural and recreational services amounts to up to 3% of the community's total investment in the tourism sector. The tourist activity related to active sports tourism on the island of Gran Canaria represents 7.20% of all 3,654,806 tourists that the island hosts, which corresponds to a total of 263,146 visitors who are involved in an activity related to active sports tourism.

The reasons the field of sports tourism has not progressed as quickly as expected may be because the vast majority of contributions have focused on general theories rather than sports tourism theories (Gammon, Ramshaw & Wright, 2017; Gibson 2017). In other words, although there has been an increase in the existing literature highlighting the relevance of numerous theories in tourism in general, in the case of sports tourism, a considerably smaller number of studies have been generated that have used the theory to help reveal its essence and the resulting principles. This is not to say that the application of new theories to sports tourism is any less important, but sports tourism should not be used as a means to support a theory but to reveal something new in the field. (Gammon et al., 2017).

Therefore, the objective of this study is to analyse the residents' perceptions of the economic impact of active sports tourism in the locality, differentiating these valuations according to the predominant economic activity in the municipalities of the residence of the respondents.

Material & methods

Participants

A total of 647 residents on Gran Canaria participated in this research, in which 141 were living in predominantly rural municipalities, 328 in urban municipalities and a total of 178 residents in municipalities whose economic activity takes place in coastal areas of the island. The age range of the respondents was between 18 and 86 years. The average age was 38.13 years old ($DT=15.92$), with a distribution by sex of 46.4% of men and 53.6% of women. The island of Gran Canaria (Spain) has a population of 856,990 (2017).

Procedure

For the collection of information, we used the adaptation of different scales that measure the economic impacts of sports tourism on the locality as a reference (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; González-García et al. 2016). The data were collected between February and May 2017 using a structured and self-administered survey and an intentional or convenience sample. The sampling error is 5% with a 95% confidence level for the worst situation of $p=q$ for the whole sample as a whole. The questionnaire, previously validated, is composed of a total of 5 items adapted from previous studies (González García, Añó-Sanz, Parra-Camacho & Calabuig-Moreno, 2018) evaluated by a 5-point Likert scale. Reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha by obtaining a coefficient of 0.75 for the scale.

Statistical analysis

A descriptive analysis has been carried out with the objective of knowing the means and standard deviation of the items corresponding to residents' perceptions of the impacts associated with active tourism according to the different geographical areas analysed. The normality of the results was examined through the values of asymmetry and kurtosis, all of which were lower than the criteria recommended by Chou and Bentler (1995) of 3.0.

Likewise, an ANOVA test was performed for the comparison of means with the Bonferroni contrast tests for equal variances. These analyses were performed using the SPSS statistical package version 24. This same analysis has been used to analyse the differences between sociodemographic aspects such as the sex or age of the residents with respect to the place of residence.

Results

Descriptive statistics

As shown in Table 1, the means and standard deviations (SD) for each of the items that make up the perceived economic impact factor (SI) are shown. The items with the lowest averages are those related to the employment opportunities offered by sports tourism to people from outside the island, as well as the fact that sports tourism benefits from other non-tourist sectors of the city. On the other hand, the items with the highest

averages are "Sports tourism brings greater economic investments to the community" and "Sports tourism creates a market opportunity and attracts foreign investment in Gran Canaria". These data indicate a positive trend in the agreement towards positive economic impacts associated with active tourism activity.

Table 1. Average, standard deviations, asymmetry and kurtosis of the impacts perceived by the resident population.

		Mean (ST)	Skewness	Kurtosis
Economic Impacts				
E11	Sports tourism brings greater economic investments to the community.	4.12 (.96)	-.94	.40
E12	Sports tourism helps improve the economic situation for many residents in this community.	3.89 (1.04)	-.66	-.28
E13	Sports tourism creates a market opportunity and attracts foreign investment in Gran Canaria.	4.09 (.96)	-.91	.28
E14	Sports tourism benefits from other non-tourist sectors in our locality.	3.68 (1.06)	-.56	-.16
E15	Sports tourism creates more employment opportunities for people from outside the island.	3.32 (1.18)	-.14	-.69
Total		3.82 (.73)	-.61	.60

ST= Standard Deviation.

Based on comparisons by the geographical area of residence, statistically significant differences are found ($p \leq 0.05$) only in the case of E15 "Sports tourism creates more employment opportunities for people from outside the island" between the group of rural residents compared to those living in urban environments, with the latter obtaining a higher average score.

Table 2. Residents' perceptions of the economic impact of sports tourism on the community by municipality of residence.

Item	Rural (n=141) Mean (SD)	Urban (n=327) Mean (SD)	Coastline (n=178) Mean (SD)
E11	4.00 (.93)	4.18 (.96)	4.12 (.97)
E12	3.88 (.97)	3.96 (1.04)	3.77 (1.09)
E13	4.12 (.96)	4.09 (.97)	4.08 (.97)
E14	3.76 (.94)	3.69 (1.08)	3.58 (1.11)
E15	3.07 (1.01) *	3.41 (1.14) *	3.32 (1.18)
Total	3.76 (.66)	3.87 (.76)	3.77 (.73)

ST= Standard Deviation; *= $p \leq 0.05$

Similarly, as indicated in Table 3, if we consider the differences according to the sex of the residents, we can see that there are differences between men who live in rural populations and those who live in urban areas in the item E15, the latter being the ones who indicate a higher score. There are no statistically significant differences in the other items. Similarly, women do not present statistically significant differences between perceptions according to location of residence.

Table 3. Residents' perceptions of the economic impact of sports tourism on the community according to the municipality of residence and gender variables.

Item		Rural (n=141) Mean (SD)	Urban (n=327) Mean (SD)	Coastline (n=178) Mean (SD)
E11	Man	3.99 (.89)	4.15 (1.05)	4.01 (1.06)
	Woman	4.01 (.96)	4.20 (.86)	4.21 (.89)
E12	Man	3.89 (.94)	3.93 (1.12)	3.65 (1.21)
	Woman	3.87 (1.01)	3.99 (.96)	3.86 (.98)
E13	Man	4.14 (.98)	4.00 (1.04)	4.03 (.99)
	Woman	4.10 (.94)	4.16 (.89)	4.13 (.95)
E14	Man	3.77 (.94)	3.76 (1.13)	3.64 (1.10)
	Woman	3.74 (.93)	3.63 (1.03)	3.54 (1.12)
E15	Man	3.04 (.95)*	3.52 (1.16)*	3.35 (1.28)
	Woman	3.10 (1.07)	3.32 (1.11)	3.30 (1.09)
Total	Man	3.75 (.62)	3.87 (.85)	3.74 (.82)
	Woman	3.76 (.71)	3.86 (.67)	3.80 (.67)

ST= Standard Deviation; *= $p \leq 0.05$

Taking into account the differences between localities according to the age group of the residents, Table 4 shows that there are statistically significant differences between the 36-55-year-old group of coastline residents

and the other groups in item IE2, "Sports tourism helps improve the economic situation for many residents in this community", and item IE4, "Sports tourism benefits from other non-tourist sectors in our locality". There are no statistically significant differences between the age groups in the other items.

Table 4. Residents' perceptions of the economic impact of sports tourism on the community according to municipality of residence and variable age group.

Item		Rural (n=141) Mean (SD)	Urban (n=327) Mean (SD)	Coastline (n=178) Mean (SD)
EI1	18-25	4.00 (.80)	4.03 (.91)	4.23 (.91)
	26-35	4.00 (.88)	4.26 (.97)	4.02 (1.06)
	36-55	3.97 (1.16)	4.08 (.98)	3.95 (.99)
	+ 56	4.08 (.79)	4.36 (.94)	4.24 (.93)
EI2	18-25	3.81 (1.06)	3.80 (1.01)	3.85 (.93)
	26-35	3.82 (.87)	3.96 (1.01)	3.88 (1.16)
	36-55	4.00 (1.08)*	4.00 (1.02)*	3.27 (1.04)*
	+ 56	4.00 (.74)	4.12 (1.13)	3.96 (1.13)
EI3	18-25	4.19 (.97)	3.94 (.95)	4.15 (.91)
	26-35	4.18 (.80)	4.15 (.97)	4.19 (.79)
	36-55	3.95 (1.15)	4.10 (1.00)	3.97 (1.14)
	+ 56	4.17 (.94)	4.18 (.94)	4.02 (1.03)
EI4	18-25	3.64 (.93)	3.65 (.87)	3.43 (1.11)
	26-35	3.84 (.85)	3.67 (.99)	3.72 (1.01)
	36-55	3.81 (1.10)*	3.74 (1.26)*	3.11 (1.21)*
	+ 56	3.67 (.78)	3.72 (1.20)	3.94 (.99)
EI5	18-25	3.05 (.88)	3.36 (.98)	3.48 (1.24)
	26-35	3.06 (.99)	3.39 (1.16)	3.28 (1.05)
	36-55	3.05 (1.24)	3.52 (1.17)	3.08 (1.27)
	+ 56	3.25 (.75)	3.38 (1.27)	3.40 (1.14)
Total	18-25	3.74 (.64)	3.76 (.67)	3.83 (.65)
	26-35	3.76 (.57)	3.89 (.75)	3.81 (.75)
	36-55	3.75 (.84)	3.89 (.79)	3.49 (.75)
	+ 56	3.83 (.51)	3.94 (.83)	3.89 (.70)

ST= Standard Deviation; *= $p \leq 0.05$

Discussion

Usually, the contributions to the impacts associated with active sports tourism are analysed from a multidimensional perspective, which offers a tool with the enormous potential to leverage the information provided as part of a community development strategy in the residents' perception. As Sharpley (2014) points out, as tourism has an effect locally, regionally or statewide, the degree of influence of the impacts generated by tourism is increasing, allowing the sector to continue growing internationally.

Likewise, physical and sports activities have become an important agent within the sector; as Medina and Sánchez (2005) point out, the presence of physical and sports activities improves and differentiates the tourist offering of a locality or area. Since these activities can be carried out both in coastal and inland areas, they contribute to promoting this type of alternative tourism. In this way, the authors stress that a series of factors must be taken into account: positive, in terms of the promotion of tourism, economic activity and local development in the area or an alternative and attractive offer for the user; and negative, such as the inevitable degradation of the environment and the possible overcrowding of areas that do not have the necessary infrastructure. Given the importance of the sector in the community, attention should be paid to the relevant indicators, including the economic impact that the development of the activity may have on the locality.

As far as the study of the residents of Gran Canaria is concerned, the distance between the resident's home and the tourist area has no significant relationship in terms of perceptions of the economic impact. Only in the item "Sports tourism creates more employment opportunities for people from outside the island" is there any significance between the valuations of those living in rural localities and those living in urban localities, the latter being the ones who show higher scores for this item. As Hritz and Ross (2010) point out, urban tourist destinations are unusual since tourism is not necessarily a major driver of the local economy.

The perceptions of the citizens according to the municipality of residence will be affected, according to the distance and influence that the tourist activity has in the locality (Andriotis, 2005). Rasoolimanesh et al. (2015) note that positive perceptions of tourism development are higher among rural compared to urban residents. In the specific case of Gran Canaria, this statement cannot be made since these differences are not significant, which may be due to the island environment where the study was carried out, since, because it is a consolidated tourist territory, residents, regardless of where they live, perceive the impacts associated with tourism in a similar way.

Despite this insularity, most tourist offerings are in coastal municipalities, which leads to a greater interrelationship between tourists and residents. Studies show that the closer one a resident is to the tourist environment, the more negative the perceptions of tourism are. However, such a relationship has not been consistently found (Sharma & Dyer, 2009), which corroborates the results obtained in our research. As Vargas-Sánchez et al. (2011) point out, it is possible that, given the evolution cycle of the tourist destination, the residents who reside closer to the main tourist centres, in the first stage, feel affected by the increase in the number of tourists; similarly, they could be more economically dependent, so their perceptions and attitudes towards the development of the sector would improve.

If we look at the socio-demographic data analysed, we can see that there are no statistically significant differences according to gender for residents' perceptions of the economic impacts of active sports tourism. Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012) point out that sex is a good indicator of attitudes towards tourism, pointing out that women were more likely to see the negative impacts of tourism, an issue that is reflected in our study. With regard to the age of the residents, according to the different age groups analysed, it can be seen that there are no statistically significant differences at a general level between groups. McGehee and Andereck (2004) noted that the older the residents are, the more they agreed with the perceived impacts. In this study, these differences only exist between two of the items analysed.

In the case of Gran Canaria, it should be borne in mind that active tourism activities are carried out in any type of environment, whether rural, urban or coastal, so that the perceptions of the residents would not vary too much, with a greater impact on island environments such as the one discussed in this study.

Therefore, given the importance of tourism in the development of localities, it is considered necessary to extend the information gathered as a measure to anticipate changes and impacts and to redirect consequences and conflicts that may encourage the development of tourism activity in the locality.

Conclusions

In general, the economic benefits of tourism are positively valued by residents. Thus, it can be concluded that most citizens surveyed believe that active sports tourism has a positive economic impact on the island, regardless of the area in which they live. The importance of the institutions responsible for planning and managing this type of activity in giving attention to indicators that provide interesting information, such as the residents' perceptions, is essential for the ideal development of the sector in the community.

For the interpretation of the results, it should be considered that residents' perceptions may vary depending on when the information is collected, so care should be taken with the results of the study. In addition, it is necessary to consider the difficulty of classifying municipalities into rural, urban and coastal areas since, when the study is carried out in an insular territory, the residents have easy access to their relationships with tourists as well as to areas of tourist influence, a fact that is currently intensified with the improvement in transport and ease of accessibility.

In future research, it would be interesting to broaden the research variables and compare them according to the type of specific activity carried out in the sector, analysing residents' support for certain activities carried out in their areas, as well as analysing certain associated impacts. On the other hand, it would be interesting to see what the real economic impact is in each of the areas analysed and to assess the comparison between the perceptions of the residents and the impact associated with the active sports tourism sector.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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