

Perceived Impacts of Tourism by Residents

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Tourism represents a dominant force in the global economy and has made a significant contribution to Australia's economic development (Department of Tourism 1992). Over the 1990-91 period, Australia's national export earnings from tourism were \$7.2 billion, which represents 10% of total export earnings. Indeed tourism bettered the figures for Australia's traditional export earners such as wool and wheat. However, the unprecedented growth of tourism in Australia has had an inevitable effect on community perspective and attitudes towards tourism.

The primary objective of this study is to understand the perceived impacts of tourism by Darwin residents. Assessments of community support can be made by understanding a host resident's characteristics (such as age, acquired educational levels, previous employment in the tourism industry, whether they are born in Australia, levels of income and whether they have income deriving from tourism related jobs) and by linking these to negative or positive attitudes towards tourism.

The sample size of 200 represented the cross-section of Darwin; a self-administered questionnaire of 37 items was used. The first 25 items were statements designed to determine to what extent respondents held particular attitudes towards, or perceptions of, tourism in Darwin. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the levels of agreement and disagreement to each particular statement. The remaining questions were designed to ascertain the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Seven broad issues were extrapolated by factor analysis. These were positive social impacts, positive economic factors, negative social impacts, residential awareness of tourism, seasonality, negative economic factors, and pressure on infrastructure. It is of interest that Darwin residents demonstrate a positive attitude toward social impacts derived from tourism activity. Residential perceptions of tourism in Darwin have been cited as being beneficial and pleasurable. Darwin residents have also recognized the importance of economic benefits to be derived from tourism activity. Issues leading to negative social impacts (such as increases in vandalism, the rate of crime, the cost of living, and pollution and waste) were also included.

The tests for demographics have shown some very interesting results. The first hypothesis was intended to prove that age is a good determinant of residential attitudes and perceptions toward tourism. It was expected that younger residents would respond more favorably to tourism activity than older residents. The data, however, suggests that middle-aged residents are more inclined to appreciate the positive economic benefits derived from tourism activity. Middle-aged residents are more likely to be aware of the seasonality aspect of tourism. Importantly, this age group seems to be particularly concerned with the potential pressure of tourism on infrastructure. This issue has mainly to do with emergency services such as police, fire, and ambulance. It would be an interesting sideline research to examine this aspect of negative residential perceptions.

The issue of seasonality is quite an interesting one, and it is probable that the size of Darwin's population, and the high profile nature of the tourism industry on Darwin economy has had an impact on residential awareness of

tourism and its fluctuations in the “on” and “off” peak times. The distinct “wet” and “dry” seasons in Darwin must have a bearing on the result.

Residents’ educational levels were tested against their awareness of the negative aspects of tourism. It was expected that residents with higher educational levels would have a stronger perception of the negative aspects. The results demonstrate that respondents were not affected in their perception of tourism’s negative impacts by their levels of education. The data, however, showed that those residents with higher educational qualifications tended to have an awareness of tourism in general, especially in regard to such tourism-related issues as preservation of the natural environment and the increase of the life and vitality of the Darwin community. The measurement of educational levels of residents in a destination area could be used as an effective tool; as in this case, there was a differentiation between groups.

The issue of direct dependency on tourism affecting a positive view was tested. Analysis of the data to test this hypothesis demonstrated that the results may have been affected by the number of respondents whose answer negated the statement establishing employment in the industry, or by a close relative. It is a reasonable judgement, therefore, that “previous experience” not be totally discounted as a tool for assessing the perceptions of residents in a destination area towards tourism. The results support the findings of Brayley, Sheldon and Var (1990) and previous experience correlates with a positive view of tourism.

The study also attempted to explore the issue of nationality—whether a respondent by being born in Australia would have an impact on his/her perception of tourism. The data suggested no difference on the basis of respondents’ birthplaces. It is reasonable to assume that the issue of nationality cannot be used as an accurate tool for the assessment of residential perceptions towards tourism.

The last hypothesis examined the potential of using income level of respondents as a tool to assess their perceptions on tourism. The survey indicated that residents in the average income range, as calculated in the survey and supported by Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, have a positive view of tourism with regard to its economic benefits.

The results of the tests on the hypotheses have demonstrated that it is possible to assess the perceptions and attitudes of residents in a tourism destination area with the use of demographic characteristics as a tool. This study supports the findings by Brayley, Sheldon and Var who found there was a “persistent generally positive view of tourism’s influence on economic and social conditions in a host community” (1990:288). The implication of the study conducted in Darwin highlights the importance of assessing residential attitudes and perceptions towards tourism development. Community involvement in future tourism planning is necessary for a sustainable approach to tourism development. □ □

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Does Tourism Destroy Agriculture?

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Tourism changed the structure of Hawaii's agricultural sector without causing its demise. Tourism encouraged diversified agriculture with the resultant production of high valued, non-traditional crops, such as specialty fruits, coffees, nuts, flowers, and nursery products. Landscape services and a host of service enterprises based in agriculture were also stimulated by tourism. This research note details the transformation of agriculture in Hawaii and concludes that tourism brought about extensive, positive changes.

When tourism in Hawaii began expanding rapidly, policymakers were worried that large landowners would sell their sugar and pineapple plantations to land speculators. Zoning legislation enacted in 1961 was largely a response to this threat (DeGrove 1984). Since 1970, approximately 30% of the acreage historically devoted to sugar and pineapple production has been taken out of production. Only a small fraction of the land has been converted to resort or other urban uses, with most lying unused or used for low-intensive grazing (Decision Analysts 1989). In addition to zoning regulations, Hawaii has encouraged agriculture by developing agricultural parks to offer long-term leases to agricultural producers at affordable rates.

The production of traditional crops in Hawaii declined as tourism increased, but the diversified agricultural sector in Hawaii has exhibited strong growth. Fresh pineapples, macadamia nuts, floriculture and nursery products, papayas, and guavas have experienced significant growth in both production and value since the 1960s. The development of Kona coffee as a gourmet-quality product has brought higher prices which offset the decline in production.

It has been shown that tourists acquire new tastes during their vacations, which may prompt them to purchase products of their destination after returning home. Several studies reveal strong influence of a trip to Hawaii on consumer preferences for macadamia nuts, chocolate-covered macadamia nuts, fresh pineapples, papaya nectar, and fresh papayas (Scott and Shehata 1980; Scott and Dik 1981; Scott, Osman and Kanda 1983; Scott and Sisson 1985; Scott, Marcario-Weidman and Sisson). On returning home, visitors often spread these newly acquired tastes through families and acquaintances. This increases the export potential of Hawaii's agricultural commodities.

Improvements in Hawaii's transportation infrastructure, developed primarily for the visitor industry, assisted agriculture exports as well. Exporters of agricultural products in Hawaii have only had to pay the variable costs of transportation while fixed costs are recovered from paying passengers and inshipments (Garrod, Roecklein, Macario and Miklius 1980). Air transportation also opened up distant markets for perishable agricultural commodities.

All export sales of Hawaii's agricultural commodities cannot be attributed