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Well-Being and Residents' Tourism Support – Mature Island Destination Perspective

Daniela Soldić Frleta [*]
Jelena Đurkin Badurina [**]
Larry Dwyer [***]

Abstract: *Rapid tourism development accompanied by exponential increase in the number of tourists and visitors in destinations can disrupt the life of destination residents and negatively affect their support for (future) tourism development. On the other hand, residents economically dependent on tourism might have different attitudes toward tourism in comparison to those who are not economically involved in tourism. Several studies have found that economic dependence on tourism induces more positive perceptions of tourism impacts and higher degree of support than non-dependence. Another potential valuable predictor of tourism support could be residents' subjective well-being, enhancing our understanding quality of life under the influence of tourism. The purpose of this study is to better understand local residents' support for tourism development by exploring their well-being, involvement in tourism activities and perceived overall value of tourism development. In order to gain a specific perspective of island tourism destination, a sample of residents living on a small Adriatic island Vir (Croatia) was chosen. Vir is high seasonal and mature destination with annual number of visitors around 30 times bigger than the number of permanent residents. It was found that those residents who are directly or indirectly economically benefiting from tourism have significantly higher scores in personal and national well-being domains and also exhibit higher support towards future tourism development, than those who don't experience economic benefits from tourism. Regression analysis of an island well-being perception index, revealed that tourism generates more benefits than costs and economical involvement in tourism positively affect residents' tourism development support. On the other hand, demographic predictors (age, gender, education, income) and personal*

[*] Daniela Soldić Frleta is at University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Croatia, email: danielas@fthm.hr
[**] Jelena Đurkin Badurina is at University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Croatia, email: jelenad@fthm.hr
[***] Larry Dwyer is at Business School, University of Technology, Sydney; Griffith Institute for Tourism (GIFT), Griffith University, Australia; and Faculty of Economics, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, email: Larry.Dwyer@uts.edu.au

well-being index are not associated with tourism development support. The results provide important insights for researchers and practitioners on understanding residents' perceptions of tourism in mature destinations and how those perceptions can be related both to subjective well-being and the level of involvement in tourism activities.

Keywords: well-being; tourism; residents; tourism dependency; support; island Vir; Croatia

JEL Classification: I31, Z3, L83

Introduction

Tourism development generates many different types of impacts, i.e. it stimulates local economy, attract foreign investments, increase entrepreneurial activities, improves infrastructure, enhances environmental sensibility as well as protection and promotion of local cultural heritage, etc. However, not all of the tourism impacts are positive, as a result of tourism property taxes and the price of goods and services increases, environment gets damaged, cultural heritage and tradition degraded, etc. Moreover, once a community becomes a tourist destination, residents' daily life changes because of increasing number of visitors and tourist –oriented activities (Jurowski, Uysal and Williams, 1997). Many tourism destinations are continuing to pursue strategies based on volume growth without paying equal attention to the economic, environmental and socio-cultural impacts of that growth on different stakeholders (Pollock, 2015). Given that the interests of residents are essential to developing sustainable tourism, it is important to be aware of how tourism affects their well-being. Moreover, understanding personal well-being at local and regional levels is key to development of public policies towards better societies (OECD, 2016). As many of the policies that have more direct impacts on people's lives are local or regional, information on the residents' well-being and, in particular, of their attitudes regarding living conditions, will help policy-makers to create targeted policies that respond to residents' specific expectations and, in turn, to restore their trust in institutions (OECD, 2016).

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in identifying subnational / regional differences in subjective well-being indicators (Kaliterna Lipovčan and Brajša-Žganec, 2017), as such comparisons can more accurately identify the needs and aspirations of people in local communities and enable targeted actions to improve citizens' life opportunities (Brezzi and Diaz Ramirez, 2016). This study focuses on resident well-being as well as their support for future tourism development on the Adriatic island of Vir, an island facing serious seasonality issues and increasing negative consequences of previous volume growth strategies. The aim is to gain the insight on the differences in well-being perceptions between those island residents'

that are directly or indirectly working in tourism and those who are not involved in tourism in such manner.

Background

Interest in researching resident well-being has grown in recent decades (Diener, 2013; Kaliterna Lipovčan et al. 2017; Renn et al. 2009). Recent research show that happy and satisfied people function better in different areas of life- they are healthier, live longer, earn more income, are more productive, and have better social relationships (Lyubomirski, King, and Diener, 2005; Diener, 2013; Steptoe, Deaton, & Stone, 2015). Therefore, it is not unusual that regular measurements and monitoring of happiness and life satisfaction are now indispensable elements of national statistics in many countries (Kaliterna Lipovčan and Brajša-Žganec, 2017). Liang and Hui (2016) claim that subjective well-being is a comprehensive and effective approach to understanding quality of life under the influence of tourism. This is correct only if the concept includes the three key dimensions of wellbeing emphasised by the OECD- current wellbeing (material and quality of life) and future wellbeing (sustainability) (Stiglitz, Fitoussi and Durand, 2018a, b). As Kaliterna and Burušić (2014) state, subjective well-being in specific domains is assessed by International Well-Being Index (IWI) (Cummins 2003) which consists of two scales: Personal Well-Being index (PWI) and National Well-Being index (NWI). PWI measures residents' satisfaction with following life domains: standard of living, personal health, achieving in life, personal relationships, personal safety, community-connectedness, future security and spirituality (optional) (Cummins, 2003; International Wellbeing Group, 2013). The NWI measures satisfaction with aspects relating to the current situation of the country living in: economic situation, state of environment, social conditions, government, business and security (Cummins, 2003; Renn et al. 2009). Liang and Hui (2016) indicated that these identified domains were applied in academic quality of life as well as in tourism research (e.g. Kim, Uysal and Sirgy, 2013; Moscardo et al., 2013; Woo et al., 2015). In the most cases researchers modified the previously mentioned domains and the specific measurement items according to the specific cases or questions they explored (Liang and Hui, 2016).

As Andereck et al. (2007) argue, tourism development can improve the quality of life for some community stakeholders, while others may not experience the same benefits. Also, several studies have found that economic dependence on tourism is an important variable in investigating residents' attitudes and that it can positively affect their perception of tourism impacts and increase the degree of their support to tourism development, in comparison to those residents who are not economically benefiting from tourism (Haralambopoulos and Pizam, 1996). Therefore, destination managers and planners must take into account those potential differences in order to

ensure sustainable tourism development for everyone. In order to do so, investigation of the residents' attitudes is essential, particularly in mature tourism destinations where development is economically and volume driven. Even though there has been extensive research on models of residents' support for tourism development (e.g. Choi and Sirakaya, 2005; Rasoolimanesh et al. 2015; Soldić Frleta and Đurkin Badurina, 2019), there are few studies that emphasise resident well-being. Accordingly, this study aims to fill that gap.

Research methodology

Study site and respondents

The selection of a study site is important for attitudes study since previous researches have shown that the destination development life stage can be significant predictor of resident attitudes (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Hunt & Stronza, 2014; Liang and Hui, 2016) and that these attitudes can change according to the particular stage of tourism development (Madrigal, 1993). The island of Vir is one of 1186 islands and islets in the Croatian Adriatic. It is located in Dalmatia, near Zadar and has a surface of 22.38 square km with a 31,43 km long coast-line (Vir tourism, 2020). Vir was connected to the mainland by bridge in 1976 generating stronger tourism development on the island. Today tourism is the main economic activity on the island. Given the fact that there are no hotels, Vir's accommodation offer is based on renting rooms and apartments (Municipality of Vir, 2020). Vir is known as the destination of residential tourism with around 7,000 holiday homes and numerous apartments. The number of tourists has been increasing every year. In 2018, Vir was visited by 93,453 tourists (20.8% more than previous year) and in the same year 711,704 overnight stays were registered (19% more than in 2017) (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The majority of tourists on Vir are foreign (86.3%) and, just like many other small Adriatic destinations, Vir faces heavy seasonality issues since most tourism activities take place only during summer season - more than 83% of total arrivals register in July and August (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

According to the latest 2011 census report, island has a population of 3,032 residents (Municipality of Vir, 2020). Hence, during summer, life on the island changes drastically, considering that its population rises enormously. Therefore, this survey was conducted in order to gain Vir residents' perspective regarding their well-being and support for future tourism development. Given the large number of questions and in order to reduce errors or misunderstanding, a face to face household survey was conducted from July to November 2019. The households were randomly selected and respondents younger than 18 years old were excluded. For selecting adult respondents and for obtaining balanced sample, the Troldahl and Carter method was used

(Troldahl and Carter, 1964). A total of 266 usable questionnaires were collected and analysed. Since one of the aims of this research was to discern the differences in perceptions between those island residents who are directly or indirectly working in tourism and those who are not, the sample was divided into two groups accordingly. Analyses of demographic characteristics were conducted separately on those two groups. The first group comprised 147 respondents directly/indirectly involved in tourism activities on the island (55.3% of the whole sample), while the second group comprised 119 respondents (44.7% of the whole sample) who are not directly economically involved in tourism.

Table 1: The demographic characteristics of the two groups of respondents

Variables	Economically involved in tourism (N=147)		Not economically involved in tourism (N=119)		
	N	%	N	%	
Gender					χ^2-test $\chi2$= 0.005 p=0.946
Male	76	51.7	61	51.3	
Female	71	48.3	58	48.7	
Age					t Sig. (2-tailed) t=-3.430 p=0.001
18 - 25	25	17.0	14	11.8	
26 - 35	48	32.7	23	19.3	
36 – 45	28	19.0	23	19.3	
46 - 55	24	16.4	27	22.7	
≥ 56	22	14.9	32	26.9	
Education					χ^2-test $\chi2$= 17.749 p=0.000
Elementary school	3	2.0	15	12.6	
High school	87	59.2	69	57.9	
College	54	36.7	28	23.6	
Master/PhD	3	2.0	7	5.9	
Household monthly income					χ^2-test $\chi2$= 2.645 p=0.266
≤ 1.300 Euro	86	58.5	79	66.4	
1.301 – 2.000 Euro	50	34.0	30	25.2	
≥ 2.001 Euro	11	7.5	10	8.4	

Table 1 summarises demographic and resident characteristics across the two groups. The results of independent t-test and $\chi2$-test revealed that age and educational level differed significantly across the two groups, while gender and household income did not show statistical significance at the 0.05 level (Table 1).

Measurement

The survey consisted of four parts. The first part measures personal well-being index (PWI) with seven items measuring residents' satisfaction with different life domains - scale developed by Cummins at al. (2003).

The next part included six items (also adopted from Cummins et al, 2003) measuring national well-being index (NWI). It should be noted that respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with aspects relating to the current situation on the island of Vir, not in the country as a whole, which is usually the case in similar researches (i.e. Brajša Žganec et al. 2011; Kaliterna Lipovčan et al. 2014; Renn at al. 2009).

Both scales, PWI and NWI, used 11-point rating scale, ranging from 0 = not at all satisfied to 10 = extremely satisfied. Exploratory factor analysis of the International well-being (IWI), that combines PWI and NWI subscale confirmed their validity, both with good reliability coefficients of Cronbach's α 0.926 (PWI) and 0.965 (NWI), explaining 77.8% of the IWI variance (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) is 0.933 in the meritorious range according to Kaiser (1974) and Bartlett's test of sphericity is 3813.454)

The third part of the survey measured residents' level of support for future tourism development on the island using four items for which respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement using a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Cronbach's α for support factor is also acceptable (0.870). Additionally, respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the statement that tourism on the island generate more benefits than costs.

The last part of the survey concerned the respondents' demographics and their connection to tourism (working in tourism full time or seasonal, renting rooms or apartments for additional income or not involved in tourism at all).

Findings and discussion

The average satisfaction with different life domains of respondents involved in tourism and of those who are not involved in tourism is separately calculated and presented in Table 2. When it comes to the differences between the two groups, it can be seen that they are significant for each personal as well as the national (island) well-being domain. Moreover, the personal well-being index is significantly different between those who are working directly/indirectly in tourism (M=7.15) and those who are not involved in tourism (M=5.51) ($p<0.001$). The same is with island well-being index: for those who are earning money in tourism mean score is 4.97 and for those who are not is 2.36 ($p<0.001$).

Table 2: Personal and national well-being domains and overall well-being indices

	Economically involved in tourism (N=147)		Not economically involved in tourism (N=119)		t Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Personal well-being domains (PWI)					
Material status	7.02	2.400	5.33	2.652	t=5.456 p=0.000
Personal health	7.48	2.374	5.78	2.653	t=5.492 p=0.000
Achievement in life	7.30	2.144	5.77	2.539	t=5.315 p=0.000
Relationships with family and friends	7.86	2.090	6.16	2.578	t=5.803 p=0.000
Feelings of physical safety	7.20	2.739	5.34	3.147	t=5,056 p=0.000
Acceptance by the community	6.78	2.892	5.29	3.068	t=4.036 p=0.000
Future security	6.41	3.087	4.89	3.005	t=4.045 p=0.000
Personal well-being index (PWI)	**7.15**	2.045	**5.51**	2.341	**t=6.004 p=0.000**
National (island) well-being domains (NWI)					
Economic situation	5.29	3.116	2.71	2.697	t=7.102 p=0.000
The state of the natural environment	4.71	3.219	2.26	2.586	t=6.721 p=0.000
Social conditions	5.16	3.325	2.54	2.655	t=6.995 p=0.000
Local authorities and administration	4.35	3.691	1.84	2.831	t=6.096 p=0.000
Business and entrepreneurship	4.84	3.465	2.08	2.692	t=7.119 p=0.000
Safety	5.45	3.488	2.76	2.893	t=6.748 p=0.000
National (island) well-being index (NWI)	**4.97**	3.089	**2.36**	2.457	**t=7.466 p=0.000**

Note: 11-point scale ranging from 0 = "completely dissatisfied" to 10 = "completely satisfied."

Among the PWI domains, both groups of respondents are the most satisfied with their relationship with family and friends and with personal health, and least satisfied with future security. These findings are in the line of those obtained by Kaliterna Lipovčan and Brajša-Žganec (2017) who reported that Croatian citizens are most satisfied with relationship with family and with acceptance by the community.

Among the NWI domains, respondents of the both groups expressed highest satisfaction with safety (M=5.45 for those involved in tourism and M=2.76 for those who are not) and lowest satisfaction with local authorities and administration (M=4.35 and M=1.84 respectively). These findings are in line of those obtained in the Euroba-

rometer survey (2015) where it was found that in terms of trust in regional / local authorities, Croatian citizens are at the forefront of the EU28, with only 20% of whom trust them (the EU28 average was 47%). The level of trust in public institutions is an important parameter of social capital, quality of society and significantly affects the well-being of citizens (Kaliterna Lipovčan and Brajša-Žganec 2017). Low levels of trust can result in a lack of citizen participation in public action, tax avoidance and social fragmentation in many areas (Eurofound, 2014).

When NWI domains are concerned, it can be noted that those who are not working in tourism and don't gain any direct economic benefit from tourism, tend to be unsatisfied on all national (island) well-being dimensions, given that their mean dimensions' satisfaction scores range from very low 1.8 up only to 2.76., indicating that they are unsatisfied with the life conditions on Vir.

It is evident that those involved in tourism expressed significantly larger level of satisfaction with every well-being dimension in comparison to those who are not involved in tourism. Additionally, pair sample T-test showed that, for both groups, PWI is significantly higher than the NWI (involved in tourism: $t=12.156$, $p<0.001$; not involved in tourism: $t=15.024$, $p<0.001$). This calls for targeted policy that respond to residents' specific expectations and that will, in turn, increase residents' satisfaction with living conditions on the island (regardless of their connection to tourism activities).

Further analysis took into account residents' level of support towards future tourism development on the island as well as their overall perception of tourism impacts (Table 3).

Table 3: Support for future tourism development and overall perception of tourism impacts

	Economically involved in tourism (N=147)		**Not economically involved in tourism (N=119)**		**t Sig. (2-tailed)**
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	
I support the further tourism development on Vir.	3.72	1.259	2.80	1.357	t=5.695 p=0.000
I support public funding of tourism promotion of Vir.	3.46	1.477	2.17	1.284	t=7.529 p=0.000
I support the construction of new tourist and supporting infrastructure on Vir (new hotels, apartments, restaurants, entertainment facilities...).	3.63	1.481	2.79	1.594	t=4.389 p=0.000
I support the increase of tourists on Vir.	3.06	1.567	2.20	1.406	t=4.656 p=0.000
Overall support	**3.47**	**1.194**	**2.49**	**1.191**	**t=6.655 p=0.000**
Overall, the benefits that tourism generate on Vir are larger than costs	**3.27**	**1.348**	**2.76**	**1.242**	**t= 3.242 p=0.000**

Note: 5-point scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree."

As reported in Table 3, neither group expressed high support for future tourism development on Vir. However, as expected, more supportive are those who are economically involved in tourism. The independent T-tests results indicate that there is a significant difference in the overall support ($t=3.242$, $p<0.001$) as well as in the individual items measuring the support across the two groups. In addition, the respondents who are economically involved in tourism are agreeing more with the claim that tourism generated benefits on Vir are larger than costs (M=3.27) than the others (M=2.76). The lower mean scores of agreements for this claim indicate that destination managers should take into account the fact that tourism generated costs (economic socio-cultural and environmental) are increasing on the island and that "business as usual" can't be an option any more. Moreover, when analysing rather small overall support for future tourism development, especially within the second group of respondents, the issue of illegal construction on the island has relevance. Given the fact that many facilities on the island were illegally constructed and that no communal infrastructure was provided at the time, for decades Vir was perceived as symbol of illegal construction. This has influenced perceptions of the local community and most probably explains such low support. Despite certain improvements (in terms of infrastructure development, positive demographic trends), very low satisfaction with local authorities and administration particularly of those residents' who are not economically involved in tourism conditions their support for future tourism development.

Multivariate regression analysis was performed for the significant predictors of residents' support for future tourism development on the island (Table 4).

Table 4: Regression analysis for factors affecting residents' support for future tourism development

	Coefficients	Std. Error	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.868	0.371	0.000		
Personal well-being index (PWI)	0.027	0.034	0.432	0.516	1.938
National (island) well-being index (NWI)	0.173	0.028	0.000	0.427	2.340
Age	-0.007	0.004	0.070	0.906	1.103
Gender	0.031	0.116	0.787	0.952	1.050
Education level	0.008	0.104	0.942	0.695	1.438
Monthly household income	-0.150	0.100	0.133	0.783	1.277
Economically involved in tourism (0 - involved; 1 - not involved)	-0.307	0.127	0.017	0.793	1.261
Overall, the benefits that tourism generate on Vir are larger than costs	0.294	0.051	0.000	0.717	1.395

Note: $R^2 = 0.514$; $F(8, 254) = 33.550$, $p < 0.001$; dependent variable: overall tourism development support; VIF - variance inflation factors

As shown in Table 4, regression model explains 51.4% of residents' tourism support ($R^2 = 0.514$; $F(8, 254) = 33.550$; $p < 0.001$). It can be seen that out of eight variables, only three turned out to be significant predictors of residents' overall future tourism development support. The results indicate that respondents who are expressing higher national (island) well-being tend to support more tourism development that those who are expressing lower NWI. As expected, those respondents with a higher level of agreement that tourism generate more benefits than costs on Vir, are more supportive than those who less agree with that statement. Additionally, the findings show that being economically involved in tourism positively affects tourism development support, which means that residents who don't gain any direct economic benefit from tourism tend to be less supportive.

Other independent variables: personal well-being index, age, gender, education level and household income, were not associated with the tourism development support. When it comes to demographic predictors of tourism support, the findings of this study contradict several previous studies reporting significant effects for age and educational level on residents' tourism support (i.e. Látková and Vogt, 2012; Rasoolimanesh et al. 2015.). However, findings with regard to gender are in line with those of Wang and Pfister, (2008) who also found that there are no significant differences between female and male level of tourism support. In addition, the finding regarding educational level is also consistent with those of Davis, Allen and Cosenza (1988) and Wang and Pfister (2008) who confirmed that educational level is a non-significant demographic predictor of tourism development support.

Conclusion

This study focused on residents of the small island of Vir (Croatia) that is highly dependent on tourism. Results revealed statistically significant and important differences in PWI, NWI and overall tourism support between residents economically involved in tourism and those who are not. Given the long years of unplanned tourism development and high seasonality, tourism has generated many negative impacts on the island and host community well-being. This, in turn, as findings of this study indicate, affect their support for future tourism development, regardless of their economical involvement in tourism.

This approach can be employed in other destinations worldwide, but it is essential to underline that it is not enough to determine residents' level of subjective well-being and how supportive they are, but it takes great effort and active involvement of all tourism stakeholders in order to initiate the changes sought by the local community. Many tourism operators and destination managers are keen to expand tourism without realising that, as tourism continues to grow, is at risk of doing more harm than good (Pollock, 2015). Research findings confirm the recommendations of Dwyer (2018)

and Pollock (2015) that things need to be changed, otherwise, conducting "business as usual" will produce more of the same problems. This requires finding alternative ways of living and working and the transformation of everyday tourism practice (Ateljević, 2011; Sheldon, 2020). Therefore, the results of this study could be a starting point for the tourism managers and decision makers to re-shape their strategic planning, foster serious involvement of all stakeholders and the application of customised approaches to promoting sustainable tourism to different stakeholders (Dwyer, 2018).

Given that tourism is the main economic activity on the island of Vir, it is important to plan and manage future tourism activities in a responsible way that will enhance residents' quality of life and their well-being. Apart from developing sustainable solutions for future tourism activities, the key challenge is to distribute economic benefits from tourism towards alleviating negative impacts induced by huge number of tourists and increase the standard of living of entire community, in order to gain the support from those residents that are not directly involved in tourism activities.

This research was conducted in a short period of time. A clearer picture could be gained if this kind of research is done periodically over a longer time period. In that way a comparison could be made in terms of changes in residents' well-being and their support for tourism development in time. Additionally, future research will also need to identify what other variables (i.e. residents' perceptions of tourism economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts) influence well-being of the residents living in a highly seasonal and mature destinations, and also examine the perception of the same destination by visitors and tourists.

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