

The social and cultural impacts of tourism, a case of Shkodra, Albania.

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Abstract

This paper aims to identify and analyze the social and cultural impacts of developing tourism in the local community of Shkodra, Albania, by identifying the perceptions and attitudes of the host community toward these impacts. The research was based on the theory of mutual impacts or the social exchange theory in order to identify and evaluate the benefits or negative impacts of the tourism development.

The results of this work showed that there is a strong connection between the evaluation of social impacts and economic impacts. Also this study showed interesting findings related to the socio-demographic characteristics of the residents and their evaluation of the social impacts of the tourism development.

Keywords: Social impacts, cultural impacts, tourism in Shkodra, local community

1. Introduction

Shkodra, the largest city in the north of Albania 120,000 inhabitants is located on the east side of Shkodra Lake, on the southern part of the Mbishkodra plain, between the rivers Drini and Buna. The city is one of the oldest in Albania and it is also an important cultural and economic center. Shkodra has been inhabited continuously since its foundation in the 4th century BC. It was the chief town of Illyrian tribe of Labeats and later on during the reign of King Gent and Queen Teuta the chief centre of the Illyrian state. In the year 168 BC, the city was taken by the Romans and it became an important trade and military route for them. In 1040 AD, Shkodra was captured by the Serbs and became an important economic and administrative center. In 1396, the city came under Venetian rule, forming a coalition against Ottoman Empire. Despite resisting attacks for some years, Shkodra fell under Turkish rule in 1479. Many inhabitants fled shortly after the occupation that devastated the city. It did not gain its prosperity until about the 17th century. During its long history the city has played important role in Albanian culture and history. In the southerly part of the city rises the Castle of Rozafa, and in the surrounding neighborhood there are prehistoric burial grounds and both ancient and medieval fortified settlements. Today the city and the area around it is blessed with numerous different natural and cultural objects. The city retains its characteristic appearance with narrow streets with tall stone walls on both sides and tall gates. After World War II, Shkodra rebuilt with wider streets and new residential buildings. These were built in several new quarters. Apart from being a historic centre; Shkodra has always been a centre of education, culture and trade. It has always developed and maintained links to the West, especially to

Italy and Austria. Shkodra is also the centre of Albanian Catholicism as well as a fine example of tolerance between religions, with the city comprising all the major faiths found in Albania.

What to see

Rozafa Castle (fortress of Shkodra) - at the entrance of the town, 3km south of the city centre, located on rocky hill 133m high. It is one of the biggest and most famous castles in Albania. The Rozafa castle has a fascinating history, that relates to one of the most beautiful of Albanian Legends. Archaeological excavations have yielded finds extending from the early Bronze Age until the present day. Within its massive defensive walls stand the Church of St. Stephen, several Venetian administrative buildings, a belfry and some medieval rooms. There is also small museum and traditional restaurant.

St. Stephen's Church - stands in the principal court of Rozafa Castle. It was constructed in two phases at the end of the 13th and in the 14th century, and was later converted into a mosque.

Leadene Mosque - stands below Rozafa Castle in a medieval quarter, once old bazaar area. It was built in 1773 by Mehmet Pasha Bushati on the model of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, and is roofed with lead.

Historical Museum - Ottoman-era building (1815) with archaeological and ethnographic collections.

National Photo Gallery "Marubi" - is located in the centre of the town and is the richest and most important photographic archive in Albania. It contains more than 500,000 negatives, of which the earliest go back to 1858.

Catholic Cathedral - one of the biggest catholic cathedrals in Balkans dedicated to St. Stephen. After its reconstruction in 1991, the cathedral was inaugurated by

Mother Theresa and two years later it was visited by Pope John Paul II. Inside of the cathedral is a copy of the Turin Shroud.

Al-Zamil Mosque, New Mosque - two mosques in the centre of city.

2. Research Aim and Objectives

The *purpose* of this paper is to identify and analyze how the people of Shkodra city perceive the social and cultural effects of tourism and also which factors may influence these perceptions. Primarily, this study is an exploratory research to examine the social and cultural impacts of tourism and the way Shkodra citizens perceive these impacts on their community.

Objectives

- To identify the social and cultural impacts of the tourism development
- To evaluate the social and cultural impacts of the tourism development
- To analyze the connection between the evaluation of tourism impacts and demographic data

3. Socio-cultural impacts of tourism

Social impacts refer to the interaction between the host community and the residents. These impacts can be positive and negative, positive when they cause a revitalization of the society in the economic field, the ability to use the infrastructure developed for tourism use, social field, the ability to know and interact with people from different cultures, nations and in the cultural field, the ability to show, preserve and revitalize the cultural assets, part of the community. They can be negative, such as degradation of the environment, crime, alcoholism, drug use, prostitution, gambling, increase of cost of living, and changes on value systems. Depending on their ability to be measured, these impacts are further characterized as

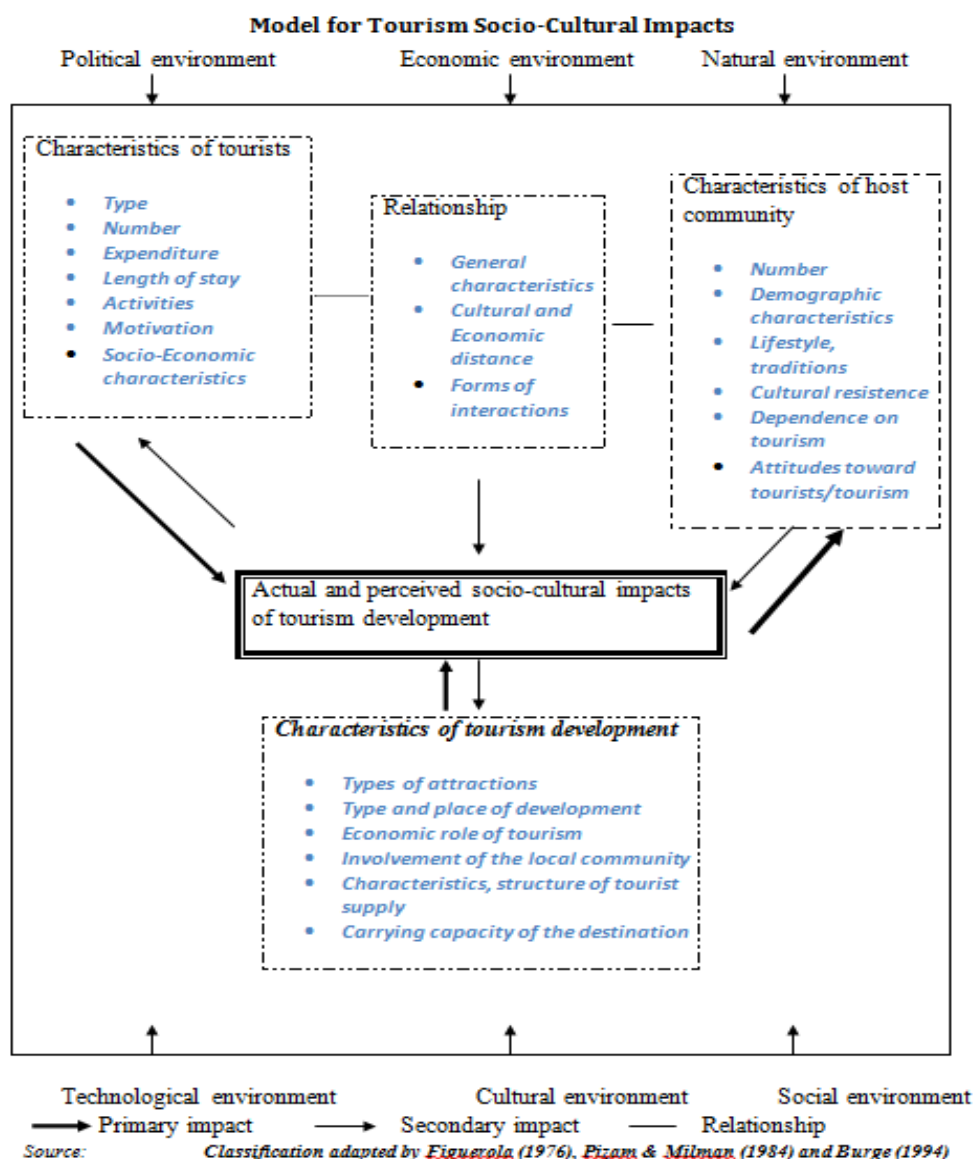
direct or indirect and as qualitative or quantitative (Dogan 1989).

The socio-cultural impacts of tourism are the effects on host communities of direct and indirect relations with tourists, and of interaction with the tourism industry. For a variety of reasons, host communities often are the weaker party in interactions with their guests and service providers, leveraging any influence they might have. These influences are not always apparent, as they are difficult to measure, depend on value judgments and are often indirect or hard to identify. Impacts arise when tourism brings changes in value systems / behaviour, threatening indigenous identity. Changes often occur in community structure, family relationships, collective traditional life styles, ceremonies and morality. But tourism can also generate positive impacts as it can serve as a supportive force for peace, foster pride in cultural traditions and help avoid urban relocation by creating local jobs. Socio-cultural impacts are ambiguous: the same objectively described impacts are seen as beneficial by some groups and as negative by others.

HOW TOURISM CAN CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSERVATION Tourism can contribute to positive developments, not just negative impacts. It has the potential to promote social development through employment creation, income redistribution and poverty alleviation.

Other potential positive impacts of tourism include:

- ***Tourism as a force for peace***
- ***Strengthening communities***
- ***Facilities developed for tourism can benefit residents***
- ***Revaluation of culture and traditions***
- ***Encourages civic involvement and pride***



4. Research Design and Method

a. Sample of the study

Access for research in an ethnographic study is much easier if it is one's own community (Sherlock 1999). This comes partially from the fact that the researcher has much more potential to fully understand the answers from the local residents, to critically evaluate them, because being part of the same community helps in this analyze.

The sample chosen for this study is randomly chosen, trying to have representatives from different ages, educational level, field of work etc. The representatives include both people who work in the field of tourism and people who don't work in this field.

b. Research Design and Data Collection Methods

The research begins with an exploration of the secondary data, which includes previous researches in this field, statistics, and literature review.

The primary data are gathered from the residents of Shkodra city, in a form of questionnaire, a constructed survey based in the Likert five-point scale. The questionnaire method was chosen because provides collection of a large amount of quantitative information, which can then be operated by statistical analysis.

The questionnaires were managed by the co-authors, which had the duty to explain the purpose of the study and the way of filling the questionnaire. All study participants complete an anonymous questionnaire. Also it was asked to fill out some other general data like age, gender and education to explain the connection between these variables and the host community perceptions regarding the development of tourism.

The first section of the questionnaire is focused on analyzing the responses of the sample surveyed regarding the positive and negative impacts from the perspective of the residents.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Tourism has improved the image of Shkodra	4.31	0.950
Due to tourism, infrastructure of Shkodra has been improved	4.06	1.095
Tourism creates opportunity for new jobs	4.19	1.000
Tourism can cause change of the local identity	3.53	1.204
Tourism can cause immoral behavior	2.70	1.288
Working in tourism makes me feel insecure for the stability of my job	3.53	1.204
Benefits of developing tourism outweigh its costs	3.57	1.246
I benefit from tourism development in Shkodra	3.55	1.366
Tourism improves my life style	3.20	1.266
I like being in contact with tourists from other countries because I do learn about different life styles	4.06	1.095
Tourism increase my cost of living	3.15	1.221
Tourist show respect for my community culture	4.48	0.672
Tourism increase the pride for my culture	3.93	1.051
I encourage more tourists to come and see the city of Shkodra	4.67	0.421
Interacting with tourists makes me more opened to other cultures	3.50	1.217

Response range was from 1 to 5

1=strongly disagree

2=disagree

3=neither

4=agree

5=strongly agree

As shown from the table above, the majority of the respondents strongly asserted that tourism has improved the image of Shkodra, we can see this from the value of the mean (4.31) and the standard deviation (0.950). Also residents agreed that tourism creates opportunities for infrastructure development and opportunities for new jobs related to this sector.

Regarding socio-cultural impacts, the research shows that the overall advantages or positive impacts surpass the negative impacts.

Part of the questionnaire is related to the interaction between the residents and the tourists by knowing the

impacts of tourism development to residents which are much more in contact with tourists, mostly them who work in this field, despite the results show a medium level of agrees, residents agreed that tourism has improved their lifestyle.

The results show that the citizens of Shkodra agree with the fact that there are positive social and cultural impacts from the development of tourism. They show desire on interacting with tourists, mean (4.61), they are eager to know and learn about different cultures and different lifestyles and also to kindly show their culture. They do not show fear on the possibility that tourists may cause or may change the values of our culture. An interesting fact is that citizens with a high degree of education are much more worried for the negative impacts of tourism development, they are much more skeptic for the positives impacts of tourism development.

Characteristics of respondents

Age category	Number	Percentage	Male	Female
18-30	18	22.5	8	10
31-40	25	31.25	14	11
41-50	21	26.25	10	11
51-60	11	13.75	4	7
>60	5	6.25	2	3
Total	80	100%	38	42

As shown from the table, the current study targets those individuals aged from 18 till up to 60. The research classifies them to five categories. The first category, individuals aged from 18-30 represent 22.5% of the sample. Individuals from 31-40 represent 31.25% of the sample, individuals from 41-50 represent 26.25% of the sample, individuals from 51-60 represent

13.75% of the sample and individuals up to 60 represent 6.25% of the sample. The majority of the individuals surveyed are between the age 31 and 40.

<i>Level of Education</i>						
Age category	Post university	University	High school	Preparatory education	Elementary education	Total
18-30	9	7	2	0	0	18
31-40	6	10	7	2	0	25
41-50	2	8	6	5	0	21
51-60	0	4	5	2	0	11
>60	0	0	0	3	2	5
Total	17 21.25%	29 36.25%	20 25%	12 15%	2 2.5%	80 100%

Education is an important element that influences the level of cultural competence. It indicates the social development of a society. As mentioned earlier, part of the purpose of this study is to understand the influence of the level of education in the community perceptions about tourism development.

This research identifies four categories of the educational level: Post University (21.25%) of the sample, university (36.25%) of the sample chosen, high school (25%) of the sample chosen, preparatory education (15%) and elementary education (2.5%) of the sample chosen. The research shows that the majority of the sample chosen holds a university diploma 36.25% against 25% of the sample which hold a high school diploma.

<i>Employment Status</i>				
Age category	Employed	Self employed	Unemployed	Total
18-30	12	5	1	18
31-40	12	9	4	25
41-50	10	4	7	21
51-60	11	0	0	11
>60	0	0	5	5
Total	45 56.25%	18 22.5%	17 21.25%	80 100%

This research identifies three categories of the employment status. Employment status is an important element because it shows the impact that has the tourism development in the employed people. The majority of the sample chosen 56.25% is employed.

Conclusions

The primarily aim of this research was to identify and evaluate the perceptions of Shkodra citizens about the social and cultural impacts of developing tourism. In order to fulfill this aim, we conduct a descriptive analyze and also an analytical one. Data results give some interesting findings about the perceptions of the community.

Data analysis supports the fact that there are positive social and cultural impacts of tourism in the city of Shkodra. The vast majority of the respondents support the fact that

tourism has improved the image of Shkodra, creates opportunities for infrastructure development and creates also opportunities for new jobs.

The respondents also show their worry about the possibility of immoral behavior coming from the tourists as well as being the cause of changes of some local behaviors. But they also agree that positive impacts far exceed the negative ones.

Socio demographic variables, except education, were not related to the tourism perceptions. They might be excluded from the analyze because they do not explain why there are positive perceptions about tourism development.

People that hold a high degree of education show much more worry about the possible negative impacts of tourism, meanwhile the respondents that do not hold a high degree of education were much more enthusiastic on the possibility of tourism development and increasing the number of tourists in the city, they supported much more the idea of tourism development.

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