

STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY OF BRASOV

Ruxandra-Gabriela ALBU¹

Abstract: *Tourism represents a source of prosperity for the local community, a key factor for infrastructure development and a source of new jobs, but it can also cause negative effects within the destinations: pollution, heavy traffic and higher crime. This paper presents a qualitative research mainly aimed at identifying the way in which the people of Brasov view the effects of tourism development on the community they live in and on their personal lives. Most of the subjects being interviewed consider that tourism development in Brasov has a positive effect on their lives.*

Key words: *tourism, local community, benefits, risks, qualitative research*

1. Introduction

Tourism development represents one of Romania's anchors and thus, a national, regional and local first priority. Tourism development may have positive effects on the local community, by creating new jobs, developing the general infrastructure and nurturing the pride of the locals living in a renowned travel destination, but also a negative impact, such as the rise of land price, pollution and higher crime within the destination.

As a travel destination, Brasov has seen a constant growth during the past few years, succeeding in reaching the top of preferences for both Romanian and foreign tourists. Figures 1 and 2 show the evolution of the number of tourists and accommodation units available within the destination during the period 2008-2018. One may note that both indicators increased during the period under analysis and we intend to establish to what extent tourism development influences the life of local community, and also the main advantages and disadvantages that result from tourism development into the lives of the people of Brasov.

According to Doxey's Irridex model (1975), the negative impact of tourism development arises when a travel destination is not managed properly (Slavov, 2015). Keeping the community opinion under permanent observation in respect to tourism

¹ *Transilvania* University of Braşov, ruxandra.albu@unitbv.ro

development represents a key factor which any strategy for sustainable tourism development shall base on. According to Ana Castela, “the occupation and massification of public space may in the future have consequences for the quality of life of residents. The big issue is how to find a balance between tourists and residents” (Castela, 2018).

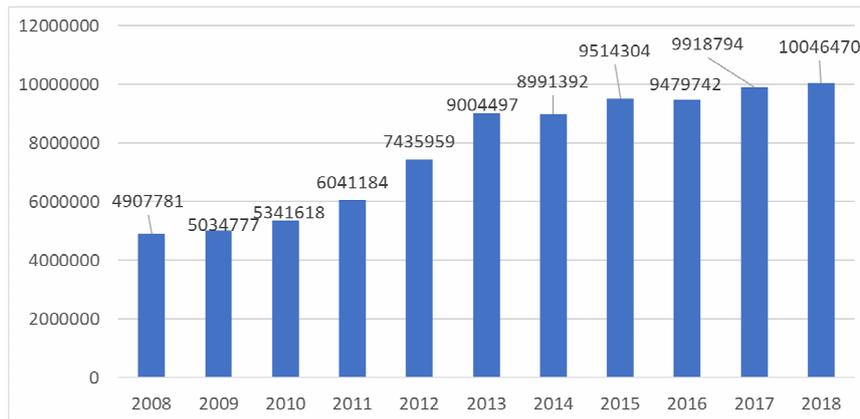


Fig. 1. *The evolution of the number of bed places in the city of Brasov between 2008-2018*

Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro>

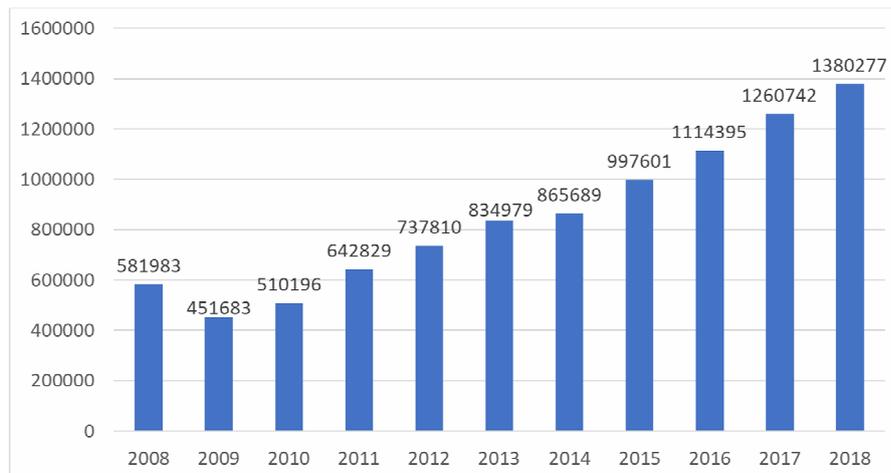


Fig. 2. *The evolution of the number of tourists in the city of Brasov between 2008-2018*
Source: <http://statistici.insse.ro>

According to Brida (Brida et al., 2014), residents weigh the costs and benefits that result from tourism and if they reach a positive conclusion upon their assessment, their behaviour towards such type of industry will be aligned concordantly. A significant number of studies focuses on the effects of tourism development on the local community considering the three dimensions of sustainable development: economy, society and environment. Out of these we shall mention the studies of Matsuoka and Kelly (Matsuoka and Kelly, 1988), Mbaiwa (Mbaiwa, 2005), Nayomi and Gnanapala (Nayomi and Gnanapala, 2015) and Diedrich and Aswani (Diedrich and Aswani, 2016).

2. Methodology

This study has aimed at identifying the way in which people of Brasov perceive the effects of tourism development on the community they live in and on their personal lives.

The objectives of the research conducted were the following: *to determine the factors that contribute to the attractiveness of the city of Brasov and the positive and negative elements that can influence the community members (objective I); to determine the general perception of the community members with respect to the positive influence that tourism development exerts on their lives (objective II); to identify the perception of the people of Brasov concerning the benefits resulted from living in a renowned travel destination of Romania (objective III); to determine the opinions of residents of Brasov related to the most important issues that were triggered by their living in a renowned travel destination of Romania (objective IV)*. The qualitative research was performed on a sample of 24 subjects. Within the research the purposive sampling was used, "one of the most common sampling strategies", respondents participating according to pre-selected criteria relevant to a particular research question" (<https://course.ccs.neu.edu/is4800sp12/resources/qualmethods.pdf>), the aim being to include into the sample the individuals who meet the requirement of being members of the community of Brasov.

Based on the analysis of the research sample, the ratio of female respondents was of 80%, while the one of male respondents was of 20%. 63% of the respondents had been living in Brasov since they were born, 8% for more than 10 years and 29% for less than 5 years (Figure 3). In respect to the level of education, 50% of the subjects attended university studies, 25% postgraduate studies and 25% secondary studies. 75% of the interviewed subjects were employed or ran their own business, while 25% were pupils or students. The age range of the respondents was between 19 and 50 years old.

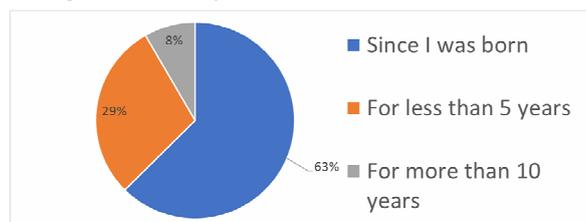


Fig. 3. How long have you been living in the city of Brasov? Q1

One of the limits of the qualitative research carried out within the community of Brasov is that the results cannot be extrapolated to the entire population of the city of Brasov. Under such circumstances, we intend to perform a quantitative research on the same topic in the future.

4. Results

For the first objective of the research, *to determine the factors that contribute to the attractiveness of the city of Brasov and the positive and negative elements that can*

influence the community members, upon the answer analysis, we have noticed that the geographical background, cleanliness, climate, nature, tourism development and the people were mentioned by most of the respondents as positive elements. Other mentioned factors were: architecture, traditions, green spaces (Tâmpa), beauty of the city, economic development, infrastructure, quality of services, price level, tourist attractions, jobs, city recognition, workforce, peacefulness, employment opportunities in various fields, a well-ordered city, leisure facilities, order, natural places (parks, forests etc.). The residents of the city of Brasov being interviewed considered that the main elements that have a negative impact on them are the pollution, overcrowding and high amount of trash. Other mentioned factors were: the quality of road infrastructure, traffic, homeless people, the lack of bike paths, the lack of jobs, chaotic real estate development, the breach of construction law, the construction of shopping malls in the city centre, prices, public transportation, the lack of involvement from the public authorities into activities with benefits for the city, deforestation, the lack of parking places, the lack of city promotion. A single respondent mentioned among the negative elements the presence of tourists within the travel destination and the wish of a certain part of the local community to get rich overnight. Under such circumstances, we may assert that, at this very moment, the people of Brasov do not consider the tourism development an element with a negative impact on their lives.

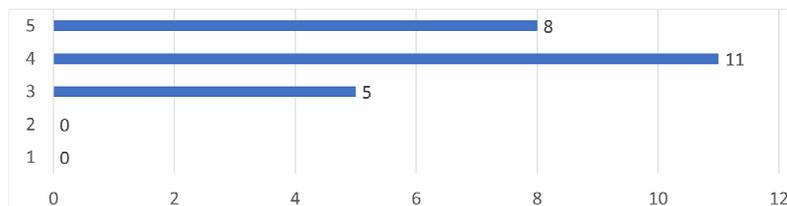


Fig. 4. On a scale from 1 to 5, please rate the level of agreement/disagreement with the assertion below: "The fact that Brasov is a travel destination influences my life in a positive way" Q4

For the second objective of this research, i.e. "to determine the general perception of the community members with respect to the positive influence that tourism development exerts on their lives", Figure 4 shows that 75% of the respondents consider the fact of being residents of a travel destination as an element with positive impact on their lives (by opting for the values 4 and 5 of the proposed scale). The benefits experienced by the local community as a result of residing into a well-known travel destination (objective III) are shown in Figure 5. On top is the fact that "tourism development influences the infrastructure development and upgrade of types of services provided to the local community" (88% of the subjects mentioned this aspect), another item mentioned by most of the respondents was "the creation of new jobs and business opportunities for the local community" (63% of the subjects went for this item), followed by "the increase of investments in number and volume in the local economy" (mentioned by 58% of the respondents).

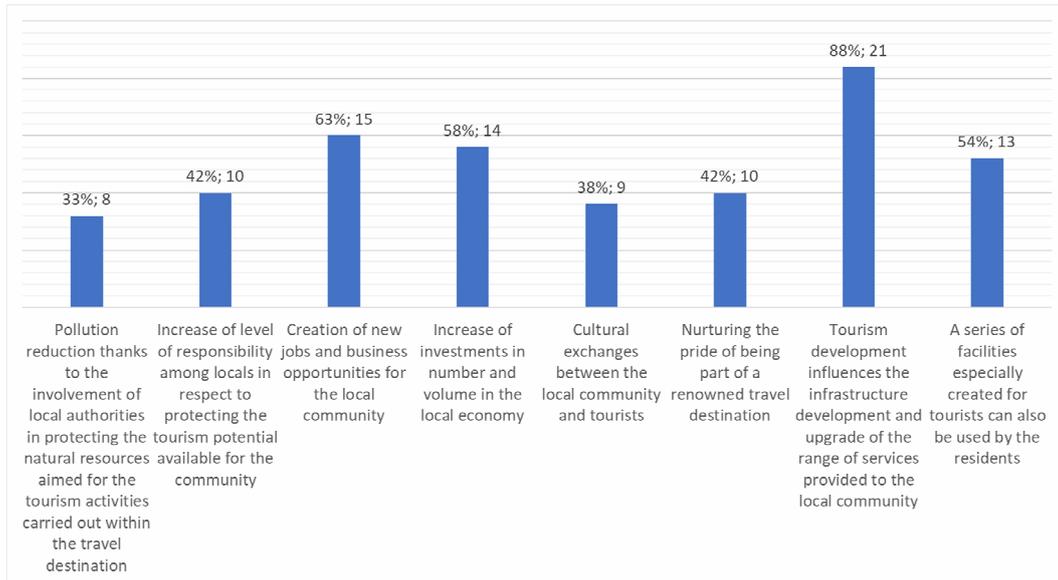


Fig. 5. In your opinion, which are the most important benefits of being residents of a well-renowned travel destination? Q5

The fourth objective of the research, i.e. "to determine the opinions of residents of Brasov related to the most important issues that have arisen because they live in a renowned travel destination of Romania", the most important issues being mentioned are "the rise of land and real estate prices" (79%), "the rise of rates applied to certain services, with implications on the possibility to use them by the locals" (58%) and "the uncontrolled development of tourism, which leads to environmental degradation" (54%), as one may notice in Figure 6.

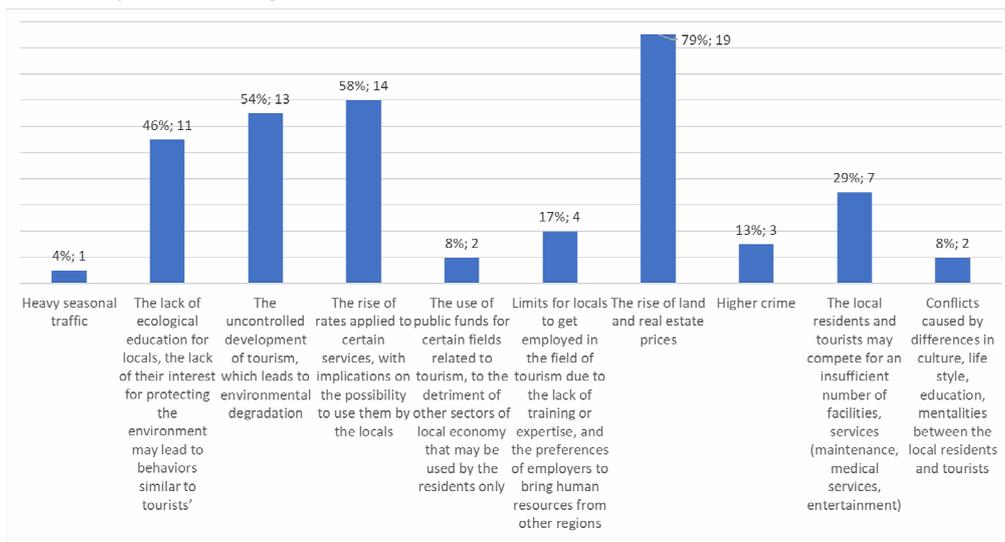


Fig. 6. In your opinion, which are the most important issues that have arisen as a result of being resident of a well-renowned travel destination? Q6

5. Conclusions

The success of a travel destination also depends to a great extent on the locals' attitude towards the tourist phenomenon. There are many cases of travel destinations, some of them quite recent, e.g. Venice, where the uncontrolled tourism development led to a general reaction of tourist rejection from the local community. Fortunately, the analysis carried out within the community of Brasov revealed that, at least for the time being, tourism development does not represent a risk for the residents, the most important benefit identified by the respondents being that it contributes to the infrastructure development and upgrade of types of services provided to the local community. We consider that, in order to achieve an optimum and responsible development of the travel destination, one shall take into account the interests of all stakeholders involved, whether they are tourists, investors or local community members, the latter having a say in respect to prospective strategies to be promoted.

References

- Brida, J.G., Disegna, M., Osti, L., 2014. Residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and attitudes towards tourism policies. *Tourismos: An International Multidisciplinary Journal of Tourism*, Volume 9, Number 1, Spring 2014, pp. 37-71.
- Castela, A., 2018. Impacts of Tourism in an Urban Community: The Case of Alfama. *Athens Journal of Tourism*, Volume 5, Issue 2, pp. 133-148.
- Diedrich, A., Aswani, S., 2016. Exploring the potential impacts of tourism development on social and ecological change in the Solomon Islands. *Ambio* 45, pp. 808-818, DOI: 10.1007/s13280-016-0781-x.
- Institutul Naţional de Statistică, Tempo Online Database. Available at: <<http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>> [Accessed 10 September 2019].
- Matsuoka, J., Kelly, T., 1988. The Environmental, Economic, and Social Impacts of Resort Development and Tourism on Native Hawaiians. *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, Volume 15, Issue 4 December Article 3, pp.29-44.
- Mbaiwa, J., E., 2005. The Socio-cultural Impacts of Tourism Development in the Okavango Delta, Botswana. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 2:3, pp. 163-185, DOI: 10.1080/14766820508668662.
- Nayomia, G., W.K. Athula Gnanapala, W., K., 2015. Socio-Economic Impacts on Local Community through Tourism Development with Special Reference to Heritage Kandalama. *Tourism, Leisure and Global Change*, volume 2, p.TOC-57, pp.57-73.
- Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide, Module 1 Qualitative Research Methods Overview. Available at: <<https://course.ccs.neu.edu/is4800sp12/resources/qualmethods.pdf>> [Accessed 10 September 2019].
- Slavov, S., 2015. Impacts of Tourism on the Local Community. *Scientific Review of Physical Culture*, volume 5, issue 3, pp. 57-62.