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Attitudes of residents towards tourism. The case of Benalmádena, Spain

Fernando Almeida Garcia,
Antonia Balbuena Vazquez
Rafael Cortés Macias,
University of Malaga, Spain

1. Introduction

A series of studies in recent years have examined residents' attitudes/perceptions of the impact of tourism development on their community. Many authors have classified these impacts in economic, sociocultural and environmental. The main reason for the growing interest in these kind of studies has been the consideration that tourism development doesn't only bring positive effects but also has a potential negative effect on a local level (Lankford and Howard, 1994; Ko and Stewart, 2002).

This study is to analyze the attitude of the residents from the impacts of tourism in the town of Benalmádena, Spanish. This is a mature destination framed in a pattern of sun and beach in 2012 has a total of 10,885 hotel places. Benalmádena tourism has a significant oscillation throughout the year, peaking in the months of July to September and the minimum between December and February.



2. Abstract

Tourism is consumed in the place of production causing a series of impacts. These effects caused by tourism can be perceived positively or negatively by residents. The objective of this study is to analyze the attitude of the residents from the impacts of tourism in the town of Benalmádena, Spanish town that is located within the Costa del Sol. We used a quantitative methodology and we have carried out an extensive survey of 770 residents. Information has been collected through questionnaires and there have been exploratory and ANOVA analysis. The results are: the economic benefits are the most important elements sought and valued by the local population. However, they also recognize the negative effects of this dimension, in the same way as with the socio-cultural and environmental impacts.

3. Method

We used a quantitative methodology and we have carried out an extensive survey with stratified random sampling with proportional allocation to achieve a sample of 770 residents.

The data was processed in SPSS version 19, to get the results through univariable analysis (data mining and bar graph) and bivariable analysis (ANOVA). The surveys were carried out during the month of June, coinciding with the peak of Benalmádena and October to December 2012, corresponding to the low season for tourism in the town.

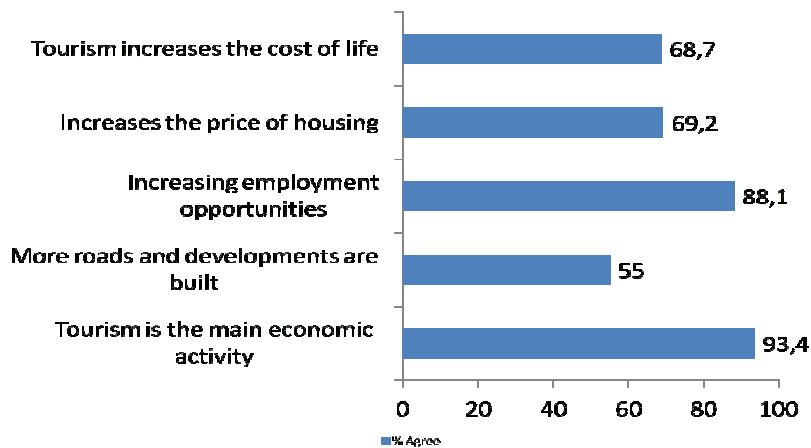
4. Results

(i) Economic effects: this study indicates that respondents agree that tourism is the main economic activity in Benalmádena (93.4%) and "increasing employment opportunities" (88.1%). Residents also recognize the negative effects "increases the price of housing" (69.2%), "increases the cost of life" (68.7%) and more moderately, "more roads and developments are built" (55%). Residents in Benalmádena value more the economic impacts of tourism than socio-cultural or environmental.

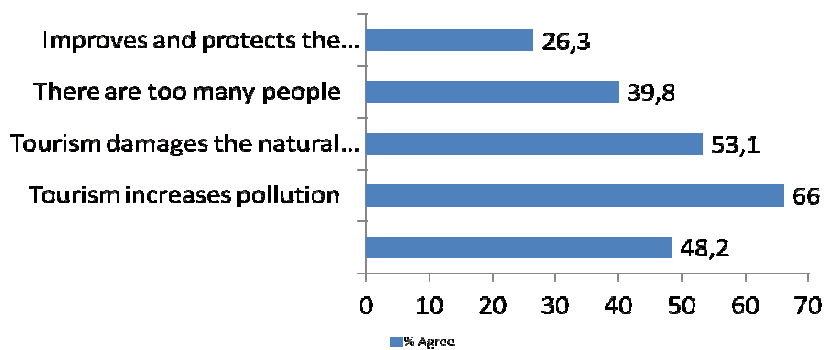
(ii) Sociocultural effects: most residents agree with the following items: "I relate to foreigners who speak Spanish yes" (85.5%), "tourism stimulates our celebrations and traditions" (73.7%), "tourism improves the quality of life of Benalmádena" (71.3%), "I relate to foreigners who do not speak Spanish" (69%) and "because of tourism there are more cultural activities" (52.5%). Almost half of residents say that "tourism improves public services" (46.6%) and 15.9% disagree that "tourism generates loss or change in our celebrations and traditions". But at the same time, they also negatively assessed other items: "tourism causes more congestion, accidents and parking problems" (70.9%), "tourism increases drug and alcohol" (56.2%) and "the tourism contributes more crime" (50.8%).

(iii) Environmental effects: this impact generates more different and unfavourable responses and your assessment is less positive compared to other impacts of tourism. Regarding the positive side, most residents agree that "there are more public gardens and parks due to tourism" (48.2%). Only 26.3% of residents say that "tourism has improved and protects the environment," so those negatively value this last statement. Referring to the negative aspects, most respondents in Benalmádena agree that "tourism increases pollution" (66%) and "damages the natural environment" (53.1%) and 39.8% of residents say that "there are too many people in Benalmádena".

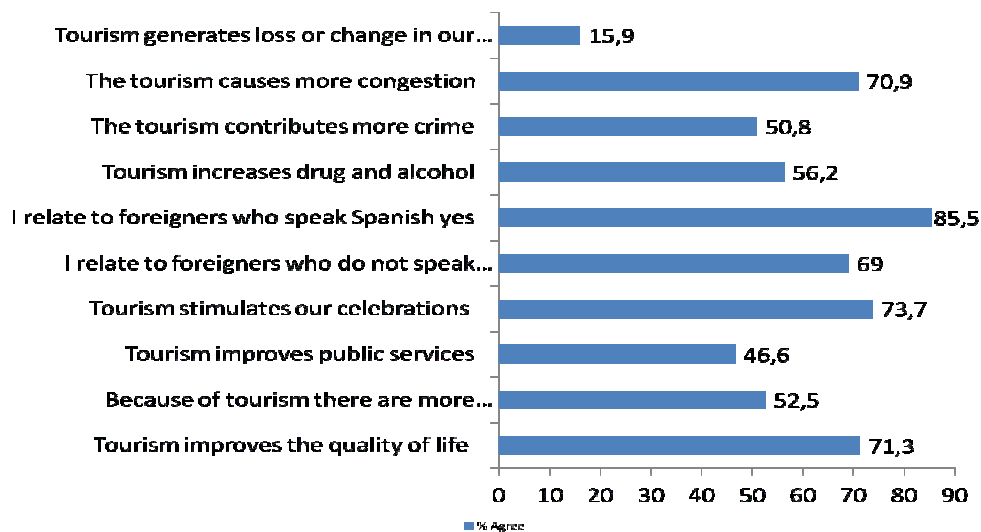
Benalmádena Resident Opinion of the Economic Effects of Tourism, 2012



Benalmádena Resident Opinion of the Environmental Effects of Tourism, 2012



Benalmádena Resident Opinion of the Sociocultural Effects of Tourism, 2012





5. Conclusion

Benalmádena residents recognize both the positive and negative impacts of tourism. The residents are aware of the consequences of tourism, but in the process of evaluating both impacts, residents clearly opt for the positive aspects and they report feeling satisfied with tourism development in the municipality. Regarding environmental effects specially, Benalmádena residents have seen the growth of tourism in the municipality without any complaint, and social movements against tourism have not been produced, as has occurred in other tourist areas both Andalusia region and Spain. Our results agree with the studies of Liu and Var (1986), who explained that residents sometimes prefer to support tourism and prioritize the benefits rather than giving priority to environmental damage.

The main conclusion of this research is that residents in Benalmádena have a positive disposition to tourism and this result is consistent with most research.