


Community Support for Sustainable Tourism Strategies is an Important Factor in its Successful Development

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Original research paper

Citation:

Draçi, P., & Kraja, G. (2023). Community Support for Sustainable Tourism Strategies is an Important Factor in its Successful Development. *Economic Insights – Trends and Challenges*, 12(1), 21-31.
<https://doi.org/10.51865/EITC.2023.01.03>



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JEL Classification:

A13; D83; Q56

Abstract: *This study aims to examine the support of the community in the area of Saranda and Ksamil for sustainable tourism, as one of the most important industries on which the growth of its well-being is based. The reasoning focuses on the sociological tradition of social exchange that is guided by the premise that individual feelings can be important elements that influence the social response of people and the supportive or non-supportive attitude of the community toward the development of tourism. Based on this reasoning, we will try to find answers to the following questions: 1) How do the residents of Saranda and Ksamil evaluate the development of tourism in their area? 2) Are the residents of Saranda and Ksamil interested in the process of planning and developing tourism in their area? 3) Does the community support the development of sustainable tourism in the study area? Residents of the Municipality of Saranda and Ksamil are the target population that possesses the desired information to answer the research questions. In this study, the fact that the community in Saranda and Ksamil strongly supports sustainable tourism development strategies is evidenced. The study shows that the panorama of the development of the tourism industry in this area and its problems are clear for the residents who express that they are worried about the situation and the community finds the solution in sustainable tourism policies and strategies.*

Keywords: *Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies; Community Support*

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Introduction

The municipality of Saranda is located in the South of Albania and has a population of about 51,000 inhabitants. Saranda is an important tourist center in the country. The coast of Saranda is a pearl in the Albanian network of natural areas. The main source of income is tourism and immigration. Its geographical position greatly favors tourism, agriculture and livestock. Saranda is very close to the National Park of Butrint and Corfu and is the main gateway that attracts the most tourists, most of whom are transients. In the South of the city, near the National Park of Butrint, there is the coastal village of Ksamil, built in 1966, today known as the most coveted tourist village (www.bashkiasaraande.gov.al)

The current practice of tourism development in the Saranda and Ksamil area has proven that the schemes used for tourism planning and management have not produced the desired effects for improving the quality of life of the residents, moreover, in certain aspects, tourist development has brought and damage the resources of development in the future. The adaptation of the legal framework towards sustainable development policies and the strengthening of the competencies and institutional capacities of the local government is creating the right ground to enable the participation of residents in the development process.

Based on the fact that tourism development presents itself as the most important driving force for economic development in the study area, planning should consider the combination of development options with the strategy to be followed; the main actors that will be involved in the development of tourism, and the possibilities for the participation of the community as an actor in the development processes.

Achieving sustainable growth also requires the mobilization of human resources, making the process more participatory and comprehensive. National Strategy for the Sustainable Development of Tourism 2018-2022, emphasizes the importance of implementing sustainable tourism development policies and strategies.

This study aims to examine the support of the community in the area of Saranda and Ksamil (Albania) for sustainable tourism, as one of the most important industries on which the growth of its well-being is based. The reasoning focuses on the sociological tradition of social exchange that is guided by the premise that individual feelings can be important elements that influence the social response of people and the supportive or non-supportive attitude of the community toward the development of tourism. Based on this reasoning, we will try to find answers to the following questions: 1) How do the residents of Saranda and Ksamil evaluate the development of tourism in their area? 2) Are the residents of Saranda and Ksamil interested in the process of planning and developing tourism in their area? 3) Does the community support the development of sustainable tourism in the study area? *The objectives of the study aim to test empirically:* 1) to know the assessment of residents for the tourism development, 2) to evidence how much residents know the development plans and how they think about participating in this process, and 3) to evidence the support of the residents for sustainable tourism development strategies in their area. Based on the research questions, objectives, and theoretical bases to explain the issues raised, the following hypothesis of the study is defined: Residents do not support the development of sustainable tourism in their area.

Methodology: In this study, we will use the individual qualitative technique of interviewing individuals and it is assumed that this technique creates the possibility to obtain more accurate and deeper information. Data collection will be done through structured questionnaires, thus providing primary data. Through the interview, we aim to highlight the attitudes and perceptions of the participants involved in the election for their support for sustainable tourism development strategies. The inhabitants of Saranda and Ksamil are the target population that possesses the desired information to answer the research questions.

In conclusion, the fact that the community in Saranda and Ksamil strongly supports sustainable tourism development strategies is evidenced in this study. We show that the panorama of the development of the tourism industry in this area and its problems are clear for the residents who express that they are worried about the situation and the community finds the solution in sustainable tourism policies and strategies.

Literature Review

Residents' perceptions and their support for the development of tourism are important issues of sustainable tourism development. The importance of including the residents' perception in the assessment of the effects of tourism development lies in the fact that the residents have highly aware of the role of government planning in the long-term protection of the environment. Perceptions are the ways in which individuals translate sensory data into meaningful information that can be used and acted upon (Fridgen, 1991). Their study is an important issue and measurements of perceptions and attitudes are used by researchers to understand, evaluated, and determine community reactions to tourism development (Sethna 1979; Belisle & Hoy 1980; Duffield & Long 1981; Murphy 1983; Sheldon & Var 1984; Ross 1992). Different studies in the field of tourism development have measured the perception of the economic, environmental, and social impacts of tourism by residents as very important issues that affect the quality of life of the community and the development of the tourist destination itself. To successfully develop a sustainable destination, it is necessary to involve the community in the planning, management, and monitoring of tourist activity (M.^a do Rosário Borges & Joana Lima, 2022). Residents are directly affected by the development of tourism and contribute directly to its success or failure.

According to Cole, 2006, and Wall, 1997, the goals sought by the community and sustainable tourism efforts are similar, economic, social and environmental for present and future generations. Some believe that the sustainable development of tourism is at the very core of the notion of "community-based tourism". Also, it is important that the planning approach is captured by the dominant values that exist in the community and to the extent that these values are incorporated into the vision for the future (Simpson, 2001).

Community-based tourism is associated with increased awareness of environmental and social responsibilities as well as the sustainability of tourism. Also, policies based on the strict implementation of top-down centralized decision-making for the protection of natural resources have not been successful.

According to many researchers, community-based tourism can be a remedy for many of the general ills of the industry fueled by mass tourism. Solutions to the negative impacts of tourism are found in the common interest of the local community, tourism businesses, and tourists to preserve the natural assets and social heritage of the tourist destination.

The term "Sustainable Tourism" is generally used in the tourism industry, the field of environment and community development. This term is influenced by the general concept of sustainable development, the characteristic of which can be said to be the minimization of the use of natural resources. The concept of sustainability was formally recognized by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987, which defined sustainable practices as those that "meet the goals of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". "Sustainable tourism" has been defined in different ways, but with similar meanings. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasizes that tourism has the potential to contribute to all seventeen goals, either directly or indirectly. UNWTO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) outline the role of the tourism industry in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (WTO, 2017).

The development of sustainable tourism aims at the protection of natural resources, natural heritage, and biodiversity; socio-economic benefits distributed fairly for all interest groups;

employment and opportunities to benefit from income and social services for the host community improving its livelihood; respecting the socio-cultural authenticity of the host communities, the cultural heritage of life and traditional values; understanding and tolerance between different cultures; a high level of tourism satisfaction by providing a meaningful experience for tourists; awareness of sustainability issues and promotion of sustainable tourism practices. The development of sustainable tourism requires the broad participation of all interest groups and the building of consensus for the planning and development of the destination.

According to the World Tourism Organization, many strategies have been promoted to achieve this, such as: attracting market segments that give more to tourism; improvement of services that increase the length of stay of tourists; improving the quality of tourism and diversifying the tourist product to increase visitor spending; expansion of the parties that benefit from tourism in the tourist destination; improving the infrastructure and increasing the planned profit; encouraging the participation of residents in decision-making for the development of tourism; expanding educational opportunities for the public in terms of nature protection; reducing the seasonality of tourism; skills development and training; protection of tourist resources and improvement of special qualities of the landscape; establishing standards for tourist services; development of programs for the protection and safety of tourists and the community; promoting responsibility for the protection of the environment and resources on which the development of tourism is based. Nowadays, it is important to clarify whether the residents in the study area support sustainable development strategies.

Methodology and Data

Research Method

In order to know the residents' perception of the development of tourism in their area, their interest in being part of the planning process for the development of tourism as well as their support for sustainable development strategies, the following questions were formulated in this study: 1) What is the perception of the residents about the development of tourism in their area? 2) Are the residents of Saranda and Ksamil interested in the process of planning and developing tourism in their area? 3) Does the community support the development of sustainable tourism in the study area?

The objectives of the study aim to test empirically: 1) to know the assessment of residents for the tourism development, 2) to evidence how much residents know the development plans and how they think about participating in this process, and 3) to evidence the support of the residents for sustainable tourism development strategies in their area.

Based on the research questions, objectives, and theoretical bases to explain the issues raised, the following hypothesis of the study is defined: Residents do not support the development of sustainable tourism in their area. Qualitative methods are used to study what people will say about their meanings and interpretations, and specifically in this study, we will use the individual qualitative technique of interviewing individuals. The individual qualitative technique is concerned with researching people's motivations and attitudes and is superior to other methods because it is flexible, practical, and easy to organize. It is assumed that they create the possibility to get more accurate and deeper information. Residents of Saranda and Ksamil are the target population that possesses the desired information to answer the research objectives.

The selection method is based on the concept of random selection, it is a probabilistic selection that gives each element of the population an equal probability of being part of the selection and will be carried out through a mechanical process, so the elements presented in the sample will be chosen at random. Random sampling complies with the law of statistical regularity,

according to which, if on average a selected sample is probabilistic, then this sample will have the same characteristics as the target population to which it belongs and is considered the best technique to select a representative sample. It has superiority over other methods because the obtained sample is safe in terms of probability since we can calculate the estimation errors and the significance of the obtained results, also, this method carries the possibility of generalization from statistical transitions, therefore it guarantees representativeness and generalization of the results.

The choice must be optimal and therefore in determining its size we have taken into account the requirements of efficiency, representation, reliability, and flexibility. The size of the choice depends on the desired precision for the generalization of the search results which is usually 0.05 and the acceptable confidence level for estimation is 0.95.

Data collection will be done through structured questionnaires, thus providing primary data. Through the interview, we aim to highlight the attitudes and perceptions of the participants involved in the election to find out how they value the development of tourism in their area and support or not sustainable tourism development strategies. This method gives the respondent enough time to give well-thought-out answers independent of the subjective judgments of the interviewer, there are several opportunities to reach the respondents and create the opportunity to cope with a large volume of choices, so that the results may be more reliable. The use of the interview is based on the assumption that the viewpoints of the participants in the survey are clear and that these viewpoints or their opinions are important and influence the provision of qualitative data appropriate for this research.

In this study, we seek to evaluate the perceptions and attitudes taken by individuals for variables that express belief, intention, or importance, and these are defined as attitude scales. For their measurement, we will use the Likert scale and nominal meters. As a result, this measurement enables us to assign numbers to observable phenomena that have varying degrees of quality or characteristic. The Likert scale is clearly expressive for analysis, it respects the principles of calculating the average, and it is considered a technique with good reliability, good validity, very fast, and very simple. The mark on this scale indicates a degree of acceptance or rejection of the submission given in it. For data collection, 450 questionnaires were distributed, and 411 were completed, of which 396 are valid. The collected data were processed through SPSS. Finally, the results prove the objectives that are presented.

Research Design

In order to answer the questions of the study, we need to measure the residents' perception of the development of tourism in their residential area and their support for sustainable tourism development strategies. According to the World Tourism Organization, many strategies for the development of sustainable tourism have been promoted, and based on them, a measure of residents' support for sustainable tourism development strategies has been built, which consists of 10 instruments and five levels of agreement as in Table 1. This measurement scale consists of 10 sustainable tourism development strategies expressing strategies for the sustainable use of resources that support this development.

Table 1. The measuring scale of support from residents of sustainable tourism development strategies

No.	Sustainable Tourism Development Strategies	
1	Improvement of services that increase the length of stay of tourists.	T ₁
2	Improving the quality of tourism and diversification of tourism products to increase visitor spending.	T ₂
3	Expansion of the parties that benefit from tourism.	T ₃
4	Improving infrastructure to achieve the increase of the planned profit.	T ₄
5	Encourage the participation of citizens in decision-making for the development of tourism.	T ₅
6	Reducing the seasonality of tourism.	T ₆
7	Developing skills and training.	T ₇
8	Protection of tourism resources and improving the special qualities of the landscape.	T ₈
9	Establishment of standards for tourism services.	T ₉
10	Increase responsibility for protecting the environment and resources which supports the development of tourism.	T ₁₀

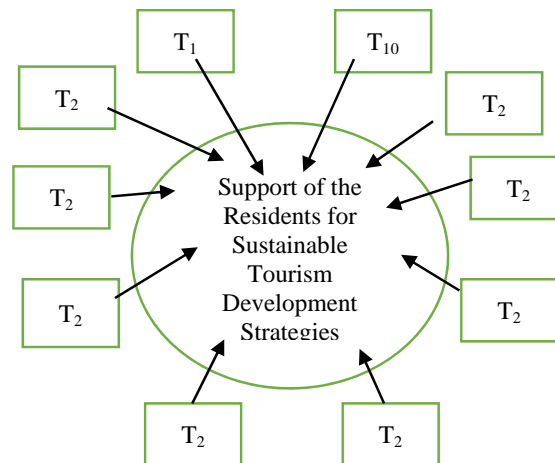
The measurement scale: 1 = Very unfavorable, 2 = Unfavorable, 3 = Neutral, 4 = favorable, 5 = very favorable

Source: Author.

The Likert scale is clearly more expressive for analysis, it respects the principles of calculating the mean that requires the use of interval scales, and it is considered a technique with good reliability, good validity, very fast, and very simple. The mark on this scale indicates a degree of acceptance or rejection of the submission given in it.

The pre-test was done to serve as a test of the survey to bring to light the weaknesses of the questionnaire being prepared and from the experience gained appropriate improvements will be made.

The final questionnaire includes ten items for measuring the support of the residents for sustainable tourism development strategies as shown in Figure 1, with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very unfavorable, 5 = very favorable,).

**Fig. 1.** Evaluation path diagram of support of the residents for sustainable tourism development strategies

Source: Author.

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Table 2 summarizes the profile of respondents. The results indicate that 24.5% of respondents are 18-30 years old, 42.4% are 31-50 years old and 33% are 51 and more years old.

Respondents were from all categories of age, gender, education level, and employment status.

Table 2. Profile of respondents

Age	%	Gender	%
18-30 years old	24.5	M	46.7
31-40 years old	16.9	F	53.3
41-50 years old	25.5		
51 – 65 years old	28.5		
Over 65 years old	4.5		

Source: Questionnaires completed in the study area.

Results of the measurement of residents' perception of participation in the planning process

Residents' perception of the development of tourism in their place of residence has been measured in previous studies conducted in the study area. From their data it appears that 44% of residents think that the development of tourism in their area is a development that serves the community, but 45% of respondents think that it is chaotic and harmful and only 11% of them think that it is appropriate development.

The data on the residents' answers to the following questions let us know the residents' perception and desire to be part of the planning process for the development of tourism. *The question: Are the residents of Saranda and Ksamil interested in the process of planning and developing tourism in their area?*

To clarify this, the analysis of the data shows (Table 3) that 93% of the residents interviewed say that the development of tourism in Sarande needs the participation of the residents in the planning process and 84.4 % say that they would like to give their opinion on this process (Table 4).

Table 3. Frequency of residents' responses per the question

No.	<i>The development of tourism in Saranda needs the participation of residents in the planning process.</i>	Frequency	Percentage
1	I strongly disagree	3	0.8
2	I disagree	4	1
3	I neither agree nor disagree	21	5.5
4	I agree	137	35
5	I strongly agree	2261	58

Source: Questionnaires completed in the study area.

Table 4. Frequency of residents' responses per the question

No.	<i>I would like to give my opinion on the development of tourism, but I am not given the opportunity and I do not know how to help in the planning of tourism in my city.</i>	Frequency	Percentage
1	I strongly disagree	17	4.3
2	I disagree	24	6
3	I neither agree nor disagree	21	5.3
4	I agree	115	29.4
5	I strongly agree	217	55

Source: Questionnaires completed in the study area.

The results of the measurement of residents' support for sustainable tourism development strategies

Descriptive statistics for support of the development strategies of sustainable tourism are presented in Table 5. This measurement scale consists of 10 sustainable tourism development strategies expressing strategies for the sustainable use of resources that support this development.

Residents were asked to indicate how favorable or unfavorable Saranda and Ksamil consider these strategies according to the Linkert scale which is composed of 5 assessment levels, from “Strongly unfavorable” to “very favorable”.

As shown in Table 5, all strategies have a high average score from 3.98 to 4.55 and this means that people assess strategies for sustainable development of tourism in their area very favorably.

Table 5. Descriptive analysis of the residents' support for sustainable tourism development strategies

No.	Sustainable tourism development strategies	M (Mean)	S (Standard Deviation)
1	Improvement of services that increase the length of stay of tourists.	4.28	0.906
2	Improving the quality of tourism and diversification of tourism products to increase visitor spending.	4.23	0.875
3	Expansion of the parties that benefit from tourism.	3.98	0.999
4	Improving infrastructure to achieve the incensement of the planned profit.	4.43	0.846
5	Encourage the participation of citizens in decision-making for the development of tourism.	4.16	1.002
6	Reducing the seasonality of tourism.	4.55	0.734
7	Developing skills and training.	4.46	0.798
8	Protection of tourism resources and improving the special qualities of the landscape.	4.44	0.960
9	Establishment of standards for tourism services.	4.42	0.882
10	Increase responsibility for protecting the environment and resources which it supports the development of tourism.	4.45	0.918

The measurement scale : 1 = Very unfavorable, 2 = Unfavorable, 3 = Neutral, 4 = favorable 5=very favorable

Source: Processing of questionnaire data by SSPS.

The reliability of the measurement scale

Reliability is essential in any measurement scale and shows the homogeneity of the instruments that comprise it. The reliability of this scale was explained by Cronbach's Alfa (Cronbach, 1951). Cronbach's alpha is a useful statistic for assessing the internal consistency of a questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha is a measure of the correlation between observed scores and true scores.

Cronbach Alpha determines the internal consistency or average correlation of instruments in a measurement scale to assess its reliability.

It is recommended that if the measurement scale has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient greater than 0.70 it is acceptable as a scale with an internal consistency that serves further analysis. A coefficient of Cronbach's alpha less than 0.70 means that the reliability is less. Initially, to examine the reliability of the measurement scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated in SPSS and the data are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Reliability of measurement variables (Cronbach's Alpha)

The measurement scale	The number of indicators	Cronbach's Alpha (a)
Support for sustainable tourism strategies	10	0.894

Source: Processing of questionnaire data by SSPS.

As can be seen from the presented data in the Table above, Cronbach's Alpha=0.894>0.7, and we conclude that the measurement scale for supporting sustainable tourism development strategies is reliable and suitable for further data analysis.

Conclusions

The tourism development of Saranda, as mass urban tourism, is part of an increasingly saturated tourist market where competition from neighboring countries is constantly increasing. Under these conditions, sustainability is a fundamental issue in successful tourism planning and management. The practice so far has proven that the schemes used for the planning and management of tourism in the study area have not produced the desired effects for improving the quality of life of the residents and moreover, in certain aspects, the tourist development has brought damage to future development resources.

The analysis of the data of this study shows that the community in Saranda and Ksamil strongly supports sustainable tourism development strategies. The reasoning is that they seek to find the solution to the problems and concerns related to the development of tourism, in the implementation of strategies for the development of sustainable tourism. So, the picture of the development of the tourist industry in this area is so visible and the problem is so clear for the residents that they express that they are worried about the situation and the community finds the solution in sustainable tourism policies and strategies. Achieving sustainable growth requires not only the mobilization of physical and financial resources for the implementation of development policies and strategies but also the mobilization of human resources by participating in this development and making the process more participatory and inclusive.

Given the fact that tourism development presents itself as the most important driving force for economic development in the study area, planning should consider the combination of development options with the strategy to be followed; the main actors that will be involved in the development of tourism, and the possibilities for the participation of the community as an actor in the development processes. The participation of local residents in the tourism planning and management process is necessary to stimulate a sustainable social structure that can change poverty, unemployment of women, and dependence on the income of immigrants. Importantly,

the results of this study can help tourism planners and policymakers to understand the irreplaceable role that residents play as tourism actors and what strategies they prefer to successfully plan and develop tourism in their settlement of theirs.

The fact that tourist destinations contain in themselves the economic, social, environmental, and cultural dimensions of an area, makes the systematic analysis very necessary and important, and this study can contribute to the integration of the role of the community as an added value for the growth of the performance of the tourism industry. The detailed examination of the issues raised in this study can provide information regarding the assessment of the reduction of the seasonality of tourism, the training of tourism employees, the protection of the special qualities of the natural landscape, etc. assessed as important strategies for sustainable tourism, so that tourists can spend more time in this tourist destination and tourism income can increase without harming tourism resources. These strategies can enable tourist destinations to achieve a maximum correlation with the demands of tourists to meet their wants and needs.

These results can help local and central institutions to gather the right information and plan the tourism development strategies they prefer. Residents asked to participate in the planning for tourism development, to give their opinions and many years of experience in this direction, and in the future, other studies can investigate the ways and means to make possible the institutional organization of the community in the function of his professional involvement in decision-making for tourism planning and management in the Saranda area.

This study helps in evaluating the attitudes of the residents of the study area. In addition to making a practical contribution to the planning and development of sustainable development strategies in the research region, the findings of the study help us better understand the community's attitude and appreciation for participation in the planning and development process.

This study has its own limitations derived from the scope and limits of the research, selected indicators and variables, the lack of tourists' opinions, and the limited analysis of factors that influence the planning and implementation of sustainable tourism policies and strategies. First, only one variable was examined, while there are other variables that affect the development of sustainable tourism and should be the object of further studies, such as the perception of the impacts of tourism by residents, etc. In addition, this study only considered personal attributes that refer to factors within the person and did not consider situational attributes which are factors within the environment that are external to the person that may influence residents' attitudes toward policies and strategies development of sustainable tourism.

The collected data are only for the residents of the city of Saranda and Ksamil (Albania). This study, geographically limited, may produce results and conclusions on residents' support of sustainable tourism in this study area. Residents in other areas may have different perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding tourism development. This study is also somewhat limited in terms of time frame. These limitations should be considered by other studies in the future.

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