

ASSESSING RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN AL-SHKODRA, ALBANIA

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Abstract

Understanding local communities' attitudes toward tourism development is vital for the success and sustainability of any type of tourism development. A large number of studies have examined resident attitudes as well as and the factors that are likely to influence them. Most of those studies suggest that the locals tend to have positive attitudes because they see tourism as an economic development tool and personal benefit can affect attitude toward tourism. This study was conducted in a community where tourism is still at its emerging stage, and was examined the attitudes of residents in Albanian part of Lake Shkodra basin (AL-Shkodra) toward tourism. The main purpose of the study was to develop and test the reliability of six tourism scales based on Ap and Crompton's (1998) research. For this reason, were examined differences between **(a)** genders' tourism beliefs, **(b)** tourism evaluation, and **(c)** perceptions of the impact of tourism throughout AL-Shkodra. The sampling frame in this study included residents over 18 years of age and living more than a year in AL-Shkodra. Respondents are asked to provide information regarding their attitudes toward and perceptions of tourism development in their respective communities, and to return the questionnaires in 5-7 days with a postage-paid envelope enclosed in the initial questionnaire. As an experimental study, a convenience sampling method was employed to select samples. Cronbach Alpha coefficient of higher than 0.83 showed that research tool was reliable. Results from survey indicated that the benefits and challenges of an emerging destination within an emerging national tourism product. In AL-Shkodra, residents acknowledged tourism's positive social benefits, while at the same time recognizing the negative impact of tourism on the natural environment. Of the research, limited data exists which examines differences between genders' perceptions of the benefits tourism may bring to a region. This study compares males versus females' perceptions of the changes tourism development has to the AL-Shkodra in northwestern Albania. Results of this study suggested that understanding local residents' attitudes towards any form of tourism development requires an examination of a set of very complex as well as interrelated factors. The significant contribution of this study falls on the recognition of non-economic perspective of tourism benefits for residents in a community where tourism has not yet explicitly emerged. This study offers insights into different perspectives by gender and culture.

Keywords: *Residents' attitudes, community development, tourism impacts, reliability analysis, scale categories*