

Original Article

# Strategic Management and Sustainable Tourism Development: A Survey of Local Stakeholders' Views

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**Abstract:** According to local stakeholders' views of the popular Greek island of Crete, the study examines how strategic management contributes to sustainable tourism development. The survey instrument was developed after a thorough literature review. The findings provided a four-factor scale for measuring perceived impacts: social impact, economic impact, and quality-of-life impact. The study deepens our understanding of stakeholders' support for tourism under economic turbulence. The process of tourist strategic planning and management is also examined, along with some of its practical implications. Lastly, exposing certain limitations of the study creates avenues for future research.

**Keywords:** Strategic Management, Sustainability, Tourism Development, Tourism Impacts, Stakeholders.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The exponential tourism growth of numerous regions and countries (such as Crete and Greece) has provoked research interest by the academic community in identifying the residents' attitudes toward tourism development. The comprehension of local perspectives as 'internal' stakeholders, is becoming the cornerstone to tourists' satisfaction (Hasani, Moghavvemi, & Hamzah, 2016) and to successful sustainable tourism development (Stylidis, 2016; Pappa et al. 2022b).

Tourism studies show that there is limited research investigating the various aspects of residents' attitudes towards sustainable tourism development in Greek destinations (Tsartas, 1989; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Chazapi & Sdrali, 2006; Dimitriadis, Papadopoulos, & Kaltsidou, 2013; Stylidis, 2016) and especially in the Crete Island (Andriotis, 2011). In this context, the article fills the void mentioned above, developing a multiple-item scale for measuring residents' attitudes toward tourism in Crete. It also investigates how specific factors affect residents' attitudes toward tourism development in Crete.

Recognizing key elements that affect locals' perceptions of tourist development would provide valuable information to different stakeholders. Firstly, public policy makers (national, regional and local) would identify real concerns and challenges to design appropriate actions for stimulating tourism development. Secondly, tourism investors, agents and managers would develop an integrated approach to enhance certain tourism destinations' competitiveness. Thirdly, it is useful to consider the perceptions of the local community to ensure the success of tourism plans.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Section 2 explains a literature review on the residents' attitudes toward sustainable tourism development and presents the research model. Section 3 includes the research methodology. Section 4 provides the study's results, and the last section concludes the paper, highlighting some limitations and further research suggestions.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

According to a number of studies focusing on the effects of tourism, a variety of variables may be contributing to the shift in views toward sustainable tourist growth. The social exchange theory supports the most studied factors found in the literature because locals support that the expected advantages of tourism development outweigh the costs (Ap, 1992; Meimand et al., 2017; Pappa et al., 2022a). Moreover, Eusébio, Vieira, & Lima (2018) pointed out the intrinsic dimension of factors that have an effect on how locals develop their attitudes toward sustainable tourism. Thus, the factors are sorted into the following general categories:

### A) Cultural and Environmental Impact (CE)

Regarding cultural impacts, tourism affects residents' beliefs and values, cultural exchange, and local culture and traditions (Stylidis, Sit, & Biran, 2016). Nunkoo (2010) reveals the residents' support of cultural tourism development, and



Besculides et al. (2002:314) report that tourism development benefits the community to "learn about, share, and preserve their culture". Moreover, it was found that tourism keeps standing historic and religious buildings (Sharpley, 1994), promotes local arts (McKean, 1978), and increases cultural pride and identity (Esman, 1984). Last but not least, it improves the community's image (Clements, Schultz, & Lime, 1993; Settina & Richmond, 1978; Weikert & Kertstetter, 1996).

Environmental impact, on the other hand, is related to environmental consciousness, protection and sustainable management of special natural locations. Moreover, it is associated with qualified infrastructure, restoration of historical sites and monuments, and a better appearance of settlements (Tatoglu et al., 2002; Caliskan & Özer, 2014). Under this context, a few studies have shown a positive impact, as tourism development helps preservation (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Cañizares, Tabales, & García, 2014) and renovation of cultural and historical attractions (Nunkoo, 2010). Furthermore, tourism development promotes environmental 'ethics' in the local community (Yu, Chancellor, & Cole, 2011) and enhances the opportunities for residents' outdoor recreation (Latkova & Vogt, 2012). Hence, the research hypothesis is stated as

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Cultural and Environmental impact (CE) is expected to be positively related to residents' attitudes toward sustainable tourism development (STD).

#### **B) Social Impact (SO)**

Tourism development can create various negative effects on society. Specifically, residents recognize that tourism development increases crime rates, delinquency and vandalism (Lankford, 1994; Lindberg & Johnson, 1997; Almeida-García et al., 2016). Additionally, tourism development is considered responsible for antisocial behaviour, including thefts (Belisle & Hoy, 1980) and drug and alcohol abuse (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Diedrich & García-Buades, 2009; Saveriades, 2000). Finally, tourism increases congestion, prostitution, and gambling (Sheldon & Abenoja, 2001; Ko & Stewart, 2002). Based on the above findings, the research hypothesis is:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** Social Impact (SI) is expected to be negatively related to residents' attitudes toward sustainable tourism development (STD).

#### **C) Economic Impact (EC)**

Tourism is a major engine for job growth, stimulating local revenues and better infrastructure (Tatoglu et al., 2002; Ritchie & Inkari, 2006). According to Tournois & Djeriç (2019), the economic impact is associated with an increase in employment. In particular, Khizindar (2012) argues that tourism generates seasonal employment and promotes economic diversity. Moreover, tourism attracts more investments, provides business opportunities and finally creates additional income for the government through taxes (Ribeiro, 2017). Local residents also enjoy shopping centers (Wang, Bickle, & Harrill, 2010) and spending on goods and services (Haley, Snaith, & Miller, 2005; Tovar & Lockwood, 2008). Along the same line, tourism development creates income from outside sources and gains from foreign exchange, contributing to the improvement of the country's balance of payments (Tatoglu et al., 2002). Thus, we propose the third research hypothesis:

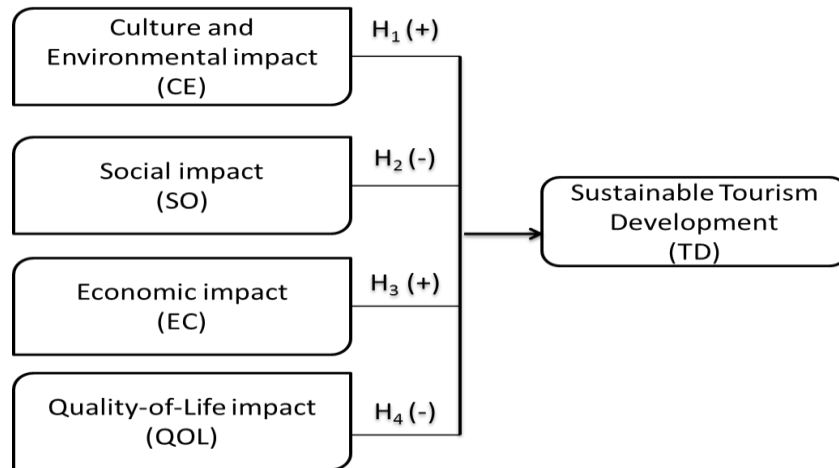
**H<sub>3</sub>:** Economic impact (EC) is expected to positively related to residents' attitudes toward sustainable tourism development (STD).

#### **D) Quality-of-life Impact (QOL)**

Tourism impact research is focused on non-economic measures as the impact on quality of life (Uysal, Perdue, & Sirgy, 2012). Quality of life is defined by Felce and Perry (1995) as "overall general well-being" that covers a variety of facets of daily community living and personal growth. Kim, Uysal, & Sirgy (2013) argue that tourism development positively influences the overall life satisfaction of local residents. They also suggest that well-being is positively associated with life satisfaction. In particular, tourism creates revenues for locals (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004) and investments in community services and public infrastructure (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001; Andereck et al., 2005), improving residents' quality of life and satisfaction (Woo, Kim, & Uysal, 2015). The reinforcement of social interactions with visitors is also important. The local community gains from tourism by living in a secure and healthy environment and experiencing a more tranquil way of life. (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2015). Finally, tourism development benefits the economy, makes it easier to preserve natural and cultural resources, improves community well-being, and generally improves residents' quality of life (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011). Thus, the fourth hypothesis is formulated as follows:

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Quality-of-life Impact (QOL) is expected to positively related to residents' attitudes toward sustainable tourism development (STD).

Figure 1 presents the hypothesized research model schematically.



**Fig.1: Relationship between the perceived tourism impacts on sustainable tourism development.**

### III. METHOD

#### A) Study Area

The Island of Crete is a popular Greek tourist destination located in the southern part of the Aegean Sea. According to the last Population-Housing Census (ELSTAT, 2020), it comprises 636.504 inhabitants and covers a total surface area of 8.450 km<sup>2</sup> and 1.040 km of coastline. The climate of Crete Island is characterized as a balmy Mediterranean providing an annual average of 300 days of sunshine and a fairly mild winter. The principal cities are Heraklion, Chania, Rethymno, Ierapetra, Agios Nikolaos and Sitia. Heraklion is the capital of Crete, a historical and cultural region situated in the eastern part with the largest port on the island.

According to PwC (2018), tourism is crucial to Crete's economic sustainability, accounting for more than 50% of the regional Gross Domestic Product, becoming the most important economic activity (Delias, Grigoroudis, & Matsatsinis, 2018). Specifically, tourism activity has experienced strong growth and is regarded as a strategic sector for the local community (Jepson & Clarke, 2017; SETE, 2019), offering job opportunities and better quality of life.

#### B) Sample and Data Collection

Cretan residents and business owners who have lived on the island for more than five years are considered the research population. Specifically, our sample population consists of individuals and professionals who reside in four significant cities on Crete's northern coast: Heraklion, Chania, Rethymno, and Agios Nikolaos. This sampling frame is in line with the previous work of Andriotis & Vaughan (2003). It is selected to represent various views on the different levels of tourism activity (Gursoy, Chi, & Dyer, 2010). A convenience sampling procedure is employed due to time and resource constraints, ensuring convenience and accessibility (Peters, Chan, & Legerer, 2018). Primary data collection was conducted from February to June 2018. A total of 311 usable responses were gathered, corresponding to the respective levels of other studies (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012; Hammad, Ahmad, & Papastathopoulos, 2017).

#### C) Research Instrument

A questionnaire for data collection was developed following the recommended steps for scale development of Churchill (1979; 1991) and DeVellis (2012). The analysis is taken into account the literature review, item generation, pilot testing and targeted administration. The questionnaire was distributed through key personal contacts and was sent via email using Google Forms. Social media platforms (LinkedIn and Facebook) were utilized to communicate with friends, family, and colleagues, seeking anonymous and confidential participation in the study. The survey took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire is organized into three sections that include forty-five items. Seven items were designed to depict the participants' socio-demographic characteristics; thirty-seven items assess the residents' perception of tourism impacts, and one question capture the overall attitude towards tourism development (Teye, Sönmez, & Sirakaya, 2002; Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003; Andreck et al., 2005; Wang & Pfister, 2008; Gursoy, Chi & Dyer, 2010; Vargas-Sánchez, Porras-Bueno, & Plaza-Mejía, 2011; Kuvan & Akan, 2012; Stylidis & Terzidou, 2014; Hammad et al., 2017; Eusébio et al., 2018; Olya, Alipour, & Gavilyan, 2018; Peters, Chan, & Legerer, 2018; Stylidis, 2018; Pappa et al., 2022a). Perception and attitude have been measured using a five-point Likert scale ("strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"), as recommended by Maddox (1985) and Williams and Roggenbuck (1989).

#### IV. EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Data were processed using SPSS software to obtain descriptive statistics about the respondents' socio-demographic profile, and factor analysis was applied to explore the perceived impacts of tourism in Crete.

##### A) Respondents' Characteristics

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. The 311 respondents were evenly distributed amongst the gender (51.4% male; 48.6% female). Just over half of the respondents (52.7%) were under the young age of 34, followed by those in the middle age group of 35-54 years (42.1%). In terms of educational attainment, the highest level of education completed was tertiary education (56.3%), while a significant part (24.1%) obtained a master's or doctorate degree. Concerning marital status, the majority of respondents (48.5%) were married, while were single (47.9%) and the remaining percentage (3.6%) were separated. Additionally, an important share (61.1%) of respondents was occupied in non-tourism-related jobs, whilst the other 38.9% worked in the tourism sector. Lastly, the majority of the participants (80.7%) resided in Chania, and the remaining participants resided in Rethymnon (9.3%), Heraklion (8.7%) and Lasithi (1.3%).

**Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of respondents (n= 311)**

Variable	Category	N	Percentage
Gender	Male	160	51.4
	Female	151	48.6
Age	Young (<34)	164	52.7
	Middle age (35-54)	131	42.1
	Old (>55)	16	5.1
Education	Secondary education	51	16.4
	Tertiary education	175	56.3
	Msc, PhD	75	24.1
	Other	10	3.2
Marital status	Single	149	47.9
	Married	151	48.5
	Separated	11	3.6
Occupation	Tourism-oriented	121	38.9
	Non-tourism-oriented	190	61.1
Location of residence	Chania	251	80.7
	Rethymnon	29	9.3
	Heraklion	27	8.7
	Lasithi	4	1.3

##### B) Exploratory Factor Analysis

The first research question about the perceived tourism impacts in Crete was investigated by the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used in the analysis (Hair et al., 2006). The KMO stands at 0.918, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ( $p$  value<.001), indicating that the correlations between items are sufficiently large (Stylidis, 2016). The eligibility of the factor solutions was determined based on two criteria, namely, eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Guttman, 1954; Kaiser, 1960; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013) and inspection of the scree test plot (Cattell, 1966; Horn & Engstrom, 1979).

The EFA revealed four factors with a total variance explained of 62.471%, suggesting a satisfactory factor solution. Three criteria were used to determine factor viability: i) retained factors should have at least three items with loadings greater than 0.4 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013); ii) items that showed cross-loading on two or more factors were removed (Woosnam & Norman, 2010); and iii) internal consistency is calculated. Cronbach's alpha values for each factor exceeded the recommended threshold ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ), suggesting acceptable reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 2 shows the four derived factors with their loadings. Each factor was named based on the primary components that made it up (Stylidis, 2014, Pappa et al., 2022a). The first factor, named 'Cultural and Environmental Impact', is related to positive aspects, including environmental protection and maintenance of cultural heritage. The second factor is 'Social Impact', which focuses on negative aspects, including drug trafficking, crime problems and labor exploitation. Moreover, items about the standard of living, employment opportunities and the region's economic growth contribute to another component called 'Economic Impact'. Lastly, the 'Quality-of-life Impact' comprises the negative influence on the region, such as parking problems, increase in property rents and price of goods and services. Also, the result of the means and standard deviations of the 36 items are reported in Table 2.

**Table 2: Results of the Exploratory Factor Analysis**

<i>Tourism in Crete Causes</i>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD.</b>
<b>Factor 1: Cultural and Environmental Impact (CE)</b> (EigenValue: 14.856; Total variance: 19.661; $\alpha$ : 93.6)	<b>0,696</b>	<b>3,39</b>	<b>1,13</b>
<b>Factor 2: Social Impact (SO)</b> (EigenValue: 9.252; Total variance: 17.069; $\alpha$ : 91.8)	<b>0,722</b>	<b>3,11</b>	<b>1,09</b>
<b>Factor 3: Economic Impact (EC)</b> (EigenValue: 3.104; Total variance: 13.255; $\alpha$ : 91.8)	<b>0,699</b>	<b>3,15</b>	<b>1,19</b>
<b>Factor 4: Quality-of-life Impact (QOL)</b> (EigenValue: 1.784; Total variance: 9.486; $\alpha$ : 91.0)	<b>0,57</b>	<b>3,016</b>	<b>1,16</b>

Notes:  $KMO = 0.918$ , Bartlett's Test of Sphericity=0.000; Overall variance explained = 62.471%. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; \*  $p < .05$

Spearman's correlation matrix was calculated to examine if some of the perceived impacts in Crete's tourism development are interrelated with each other, and the results are presented in Table 3. The majority of the marked correlations are positive and either statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ . However, there is a negative and low correlation between SO and EC ( $r = -.011$ ;  $p > 0.01$ ) as well as a negative and median correlation between STD and SO ( $r = -.323$ ;  $p > 0.01$ ).

**Table 3: Spearman Correlation Matrix**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>CE (1)</b>	<b>SO (2)</b>	<b>EC (3)</b>	<b>QOL (4)</b>	<b>STD (5)</b>
CE (1)	1				
SO (2)	.091	1			
EC (3)	.659**	-.011	1		
QOL (4)	.550**	.278**	.622**	1	
STD (5)	.336**	-.323**	.443**	.163**	1

Notes: CE: Cultural and Environmental Impact, SO: Social Impact, EC: Economic Impact, QOL: Quality-of-life Impact, STD: Sustainable Tourism Development. \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## V. CONCLUSION

The research findings allow for the drawing of several conclusions. Based on the views of Cretan residents, two factors are crucial for sustainable tourism development. The first is the 'cultural and environmental' factor, and the other is the 'economic' factor. The former refers to improving the general image of the environment, public (road and traffic) infrastructure, the quality of services and the maintenance of cultural identity and culture. The latter emphasizes improving the economic status of residents and their purchasing power, the attraction of investments and the creation of job opportunities. On the other hand, tourism development brings with it some unacceptable negative impacts that are related to the social and quality of life. Thus, more effective strategic planning is needed to decrease gambling, criminality, drug trafficking, road accidents, and the harm done to the natural environment.

There are some limitations to the study results that need to be acknowledged. First, the questionnaire's content is still fairly basic and lacks diversity. The items used in this study were carefully chosen based on a comprehensive literature review. Future research could produce more interesting findings if new items are added to the questionnaire. In addition, a new line of research is to obtain data after the Covid-19 pandemic covering an extended period of time. Lastly, the study drew participants from the local residents of Crete. The next step should include 'external' stakeholders' (for instance, investors') perceptions of tourism impacts.

## Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest concerning the publishing of this paper.

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