

LOCAL COMMUNITY ATTITUDE AS A SUCCESS FACTOR
IN A TOURISM PROJECT

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Abstract: Tourism development planning and management are not possible if local population attitudes towards tourism are not known or taken into consideration. In order to get the local residents involved in tourism policies, it is necessary for them to have a favorable attitude towards tourism. Thus, in this paper we present the results of a research project, in which the attitudes of residents of a rural community in the Central Asia area were examined. The employed methodology included in-depth interviews, as well as a Likert-type questions questionnaire which included cognitive, affective and behavioral components. The main findings suggest the existence of favorable attitudes; However, due to failures in planning and training, people show little enterprising or proactive behavior.

Key words: Attitude. Community tourism. Biosphere reserve. Monarch butterfly.

I. Introduction

Undoubtedly, the planning and management of tourism development involves a complex process. In which it is necessary to contemplate, among many other aspects, the attitude of the local resident if he intends the success of such an enterprise. A favorable attitude from the local community is an ingredient essential to achieve the objectives of community tourism: offer economic alternatives to a rural population with poverty problems due to the crisis in the countryside. This article presents the results of a research work whose objective was to know the attitude of the population residing in the community of Macheros -rural population of the center of Mexico-towards tourism. In the town of Macheros, a community tourism project was started to alleviate the restriction to forest resources as a result of their declaration as a Protected Natural Area and Biosphere Reserve. However, the years in progress, tourists or visitors have not arrived in the amount they expected or the "success" of other communities in the Reserve has not been achieved.

II. Literature review

Attitudes as a determinant of human behavior have special relevance for the Social psychology. Beyond the fact that attitudes are the object of many communication campaigns in favor of environmental protection, accident prevention or political participation, they play a central role in the processes of social change,

given their nature as factors mediator between the person and the social context to which they belong. The attitude, according to Eagly and Chaiken (1993, quoted in Morales 1999), is a psychological tendency which is expressed by evaluating a particular object with a certain degree of favorability or unfavourability. Defining attitude as a tendency implies that it is an internal state of the person, therefore, is not something that resides in the environment external to him, but neither is he a observable response. Attitude is something that mediates and intervenes between external aspects (stimuli) and the person's reactions (evaluative response). When saying that it is an evaluative response, the attitude refers to the assignment of values positive or negative to an object, that is, connotative, that transcend the merely denotative or descriptive. Therefore, since the attitude is an internal state, it will have to be inferred from responses manifest and observable, and being evaluative, said answers will be of approval or disapproval, attraction or rejection, approach or avoidance (Morales, 1999). The evaluation implies that every attitude has a valence or direction and an intensity. The first refers to the positive or negative character attributed to the object of the attitude and the intensity gives an account of the gradation of that valence. However, it may be the case that an attitude falls at the point of indifference or neutral point, either because the person does not have an attitude formed towards the object in question, in which case it is said to have a non-attitude, or because its attitude is ambiguous, that is, it consists simultaneously of positive and negative aspects with about the same intensity. In this way, attitudes have been conceived as learned predispositions to respond consciously or unconsciously to an object or class of objects (Rosemberg and Hovland, 1960, cited in Royo Vela and Ruíz Molina, 2009). Burillo (1991, cited in Castaño, 2005) defines an attitude as a predisposition to act, learned, directed towards an object, person or situation, that is manifested through observable responses. Such responses have traditionally been grouped into three categories: cognitive, affective and conative-behavioral. The idea that an attitude, a unique internal state, can be expressed in different ways implies accepting the complexity of said state, Hence, many authors speak of the three components or elements of attitude (Eagly and Chaiken 1993, cited in Morales 1999). Thus the first evaluative response of an attitude is the cognitive one. The above means that the positive or negative evaluation of an object occurs through thoughts and ideas, which in studies of attitudes has been called beliefs, that is, a probabilistic association between the object and some of its attributes. Affective responses are fundamentally feelings, moods and emotions associated with the attitude object. Some authors raise that this is the central element of attitude. Others have even gone so far as to affirm that this is the single component of attitude. In the conative-behavioral responses are located the behaviors and behavioral intentions (Morales, 1999). However, the fact that there are three types of answers or elements does not mean that the attitude lose its character as a unitary entity. For if the attitude

is an internal evaluative state, the three types of responses constitute its pathways of expression. Methodologically, although the three types of answers are different from each other, although not completely, they all refer to the same variable or attitude. Therefore, it can be expected that they are positively related, although not very intensely (Morales, 1999).

On the other hand, if the attitude is considered mediating between the external stimuli and the responses or reactions of the person to an environment, the attitude would be a form of active adaptation of the person to his environment. This assumes that attitude is the product of a whole series of experiences of the person with the object of the attitude. Finally, because an attitude can be expressed in three different ways, one would have to expect that positive beliefs corresponded to positive affects and, consequently, behaviors of approach to the object. The opposite should occur with negative beliefs, that is, one could postulate that there was consistency in the expressions of the attitude. But it doesn't always happen that way. form, since not all beliefs arise from a precise, detailed and pondered knowledge of said object, but rather the intensity of the affective charge or a high degree of familiarity. The inconsistency between the three responses may occur because the origin of it is more affective or behavioral than cognitive; due to the absence of beliefs about the attitudinal object, which prevents that the attitude is clearly defined; or the lack of attitude due to not having experience and dealing with said object (Chaiken and Baldwin, 1981 cited in Morales 1999).

From this perspective, attitudes can be determinants of behavior (Castaño, 2005). Therefore, its study is considered a prerequisite for action prediction (Díaz Armas and Gutiérrez Tano, 2010). Hence the importance of studying an attitude, since once knowing it, actions can be predicted with some precision, if there is a negative attitude, the actions will tend to be equally negative or vice versa, so once knowing the attitude conduct can be directed according to the interests pursued.

III. Analysis

Tourism is an emerging activity in populations, because it represents an opportunity unexpected for them, who can improve their living conditions and aspire to development (López Pardo and Palomino Villavicencio, 2008) or also make them worse. However, the participation of residents is necessary for the tourist activity to take place, since Royo Vela and Ruíz Molina (2009) point out that an open and hospitable local population is a critical factor in the success of tourism development. In addition, the interaction of the resident community with the tourist, that is, the "friendly treatment", is one of the of the factors for the management of the tourist destination since this kind treatment is a basic intangible that encourages the choice of said destination and allows to reinforce the feeling of mutual acceptance between resident and tourist, affecting the experience and, therefore, visitor satisfaction (Díaz

Armas and Gutiérrez Taño, 2010). Said satisfaction will be possible if the population has an attitude favorable, as a disgruntled, apathetic or distrustful resident community will ultimately broadcast instance these feelings to tourists (Royo Vela and Ruíz Molina, 2009). When studying the attitudes related to tourism, the predisposition and evaluation of the population is known resident to receive visitors in their locality, because it entails a series of modifications in their daily lives, which is why numerous authors have recognized that success and sustainability of tourism activity depend, to a large extent, on the support it receives from the receiving community (Díaz Armas and Gutiérrez Taño, 2010).

On the other hand, tourism development planning is not possible if they are not known and taken into account. Consideration the attitudes of the local population (Huete, 2010). In order to get the involvement of the residents in tourism policies, it is necessary that they have a favorable attitude, that perceive tourism as beneficial for the economic development of their locality and for the well-being of its inhabitants (Royo Vela and Ruíz Molina, 2009). Therefore, it is assumed that if the residents adopt attitudes contrary to the interests of the planners, they run the risk of not achieve their goals (Harrill, 2004), when there is no such support, the resident will not show willing to work in tourism activities, there will be few entrepreneurial initiatives and innovative and the interactions between tourists and residents will also have many possibilities of be negative (Pearce, 1998; quoted in Díaz Armas and Gutiérrez Taño, 2010). Therefore, the support of local residents towards tourism is of paramount importance to policy makers and to entrepreneurs (Akis, et. al, 1996). In addition, knowing the attitude of the host communities allows specific action plans to be carried out that enhance the perceived advantages of tourism and reduce the importance of the negative impact (Díaz Armas and Gutiérrez Taño, 2010). Even though the attitude of the receiving communities towards tourism is an important factor in the development of the tourist destination, is a subject little addressed, despite the fact that, as Castaño points out (2005), tourism plays an important role in the economy, not only in developed countries and traditionally tourist; but also in certain emerging countries. The studies carried out on the attitudes of the receiving community regarding tourism, they regularly analyze them based on perceptions. Thus it is proposed that the impacts of tourism that the local population perceives will influence their attitudes (Lui and Var, 1986; Long, Perdue and Allen, 1990; Ko Dong Wan and Stewart, 2002; Harrill and Potts, 2003; Kuvan and Akan, 2005; Vargas-Sanchez, Plaza-Mejía and Porrás-Bueno, 2009; Royo Vela and Ruíz Molina, 2009; Brida, Riaño and Zapata Aguirre, 2011), in several cases this relationship is analyzed from the theory of social exchange that postulates that if the perceived benefits exceed the costs caused by tourism, the attitude of the receiving community will be positive and vice versa, if the damages are greater than the advantages, the attitude will be negative (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2003;

Zhang JiaYing, Inbakaran & Jackson, 2006; McGehee and Andereck, 2004; Látková and Vogt, 2012), likewise, it is linked to attitudes towards variables such as ethnic identity (Key and Pillai, 2006) or with cohesion, satisfaction and community interests (Nepal, 2008). For example, a study on the attitude of residents towards tourism, carried out in Ghana by Teye, et al. to the. (2002), uses a scale that measures seven variables that affect attitude: social interaction with tourists, favorable cultural influences, impacts on the public good, intervention in daily life, economic costs and behavior change, and perception. The results show that tourism does not meet the expectations of the local population and the people who work in businesses related to tourism have negative attitudes towards it, perhaps, the authors assert, because most of the tourists who come to the Cape Coast do so. They do on trips organized by companies located in Accra (by two-hour flight), they remain just a few hours on the beach, and then head to other places. This is due, according to researchers, because there is a scarce offer of attractions and services, since the beach has basic infrastructure, in addition to the fact that tourism is seasonal. All this may explain why the most of the population has a negative attitude towards tourism. The local community can also adopt an anti-tourism attitude, due to the exploitation of resources, especially environmental ones, which sometimes gives rise to conflicts (Castaño, 2005). The different uses that can be given to the land, generally of great value and fragility ecology generate tensions for the interests of each person. As is the case of the work carried out carried out by McKercher (1992, quoted in Castaño, 2005): “Tourism and disputes over the use of the land”, which raises the tensions derived from the traditional exploitation of resources and the defenders of tourist uses. Other determinants for adopting an anti-tourism attitude have been the change in land use for the construction of residential subdivisions and, as consequently, the loss of farmland, environmental problems due to the proliferation of septic tanks and road congestion, as well as immigration as residents perceive it as a threat to their way of life. In another group of investigations, the inhabitants of tourist destinations are classified into segments or clusters. Thus Díaz Armas and Gutiérrez Taño (2010) in their study on the attitudes of residents of a mature island destination, Tenerife, managed to segment these residents into three groups from the perceived impacts, costs-benefits, and carry out a subsequent comparison.

IV. Discussion

A cluster segment was characterized as ambiguous or normalized in which they are found. Those who consider that tourism favors the economy of the community, although they do not believe that achieve very outstanding positive effects in the social, cultural and environmental aspects, for which reason they show a certain not so favorable attitude. Another group is made up of anti-tourism development, radical and sensitive to impacts, this segment considers that tourism favors the economy of the

place but rejects it because he believes that it is a source of negative social impacts, cultural and environmental. Finally, there are those pro-development tourism, sensitive to the positive impacts of the tourist activity among which are located the residents who consider their such activity as a source of positive impacts in all dimensions, among which stands out the economic. They believe that tourism is a fundamental pillar of the economy of Tenerife, however show some sensitivity to environmental costs. Diaz Armas and Gutiérrez Taño (2010) conclude that readiness levels differ depending on the resident's point of view on the individual and community benefits. Since they perceive greater group benefits than thus suggest working because the individual advantage perceived by residents of this destination is greater and thus improve the disposition towards tourism. On the other hand, Huete (2010) examines the opinions and attitudes of residents regarding the changes that have witnessed in a region of the Spanish Mediterranean coast where tourism is based mainly on the construction of second homes on a massive scale. the study leave see that there is an opinion closer to approval than to rejection, before which he proposes a explanation apart from the theory of social exchange, since the residents of the municipalities of the study region consider that the personal favors they can receive from tourism will come to them indirectly by the general increase in wealth in the social group of which they form party, regardless of their occupation. As a consequence, he identifies two groups. To the first he calls it defenders and is made up of people who show resolute support for tourism. To the second, he calls it critics who, while acknowledging the economic value of residential tourism, think which is exhausted for what they consider it necessary to restructure the model. What has been established in several studies is that the analysis of attitudes has allowed the population segmentation (see also Brida, et. al., 2011);

V. Conclusion

This shows that the communities locals do not have homogeneous attitudes towards aspects of tourism. while some residents can form optimistic development support groups, others within the same community can express their total disapproval. On the other hand, it has also been established in said investigations that there are factors or conditions that vary the intensity or the sense of impact. Within these factors, two dimensions are included in the analysis, one internal or intrinsic and another external or extrinsic (Díaz Armas and Gutiérrez Taño, 2010) such as number and type of visitors, length of stay, massive movement of arrivals and departures of tourists, link tourist-resident, various segments of tourists, tourist spending, existing leisure activities. Economic circumstances of the destination, economic diversification, the involvement of the different interested parties, spatial characteristics of the destination, or of the resident, working or not in the activity tourism, residing in rural areas, of

tourist or purely tourist influence, social profile and resident demographic, feeling of attachment to their community.

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