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LOCAL RESIDENTS' ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACTS OF TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the attitudes and perceptions of key stakeholders in tourism destination development regarding the impacts of tourism, with the objective of determining whether local residents perceive the impacts of tourism differently if they live in different parts of the unequally developed tourism region. Based on the attitudes of 500 residents of the targeted region collected using the CAWI method, the findings suggest that there are differences in the perception of tourism impacts in relation to the sub-regional affiliation of the respondents. The residents of the underdeveloped mountainous sub-region are not aware of some of the impacts of tourism, but the same impacts are perceived as negative in the coastal part or on the islands. Despite the fact that the region is generally considered a successful and developed tourist destination (as measured by the number of overnight stays, arrivals and tourism revenues), the findings of this research are relevant in terms of planning and management of regional tourism development. Residents' perceptions indicate which tourism impacts should be managed better (negative impacts), which are well managed (positive impacts) and which areas should be prioritized (perceived as neither positive nor negative impacts). The recorded attitudes of residents could therefore indirectly help reduce disproportions in tourism development between subregions, if taken into account by decision-makers.

Keywords: residents' perception, tourism impacts, geographical diversity, tourism development

1. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Due to its benefits in terms of the economy, infrastructure, employment, standard of living and quality of life (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021), tourism is not only of national but also of global importance. It supports growth in developing countries (Perić and Šverko Grdić, 2017) by increasing tourism revenues (Čavlek *et al.*, 2011), but inevitably also contributes to

rising costs of living in tourist destinations, which are largely related to the level of tourism development (Kim *et al.*, 2013; Lin *et al.*, 2017). In addition to the economic impact, the impact on the local community can be observed through behavioral changes related to the changing social environment (Viana Lora and Nel-lo Andreu, 2020) as well as changes in the natural environment (Chen, 2020).

The topic of resident attitudes has been of interest to researchers for several decades which demonstrates the importance of resident perceptions and engagement in tourism development (Boley *et al.*, 2014; Joo *et al.*, 2020; Lawton and Weaver, 2015). However, the sub-regional affiliation of residents in relation to their perceptions of tourism impacts is still unexplored. The aim of this study is therefore to contribute to this gap by determining whether there are differences in residents' perceptions of tourism impacts depending on the sub-regional context. The choice of the tourism destination region is determined by the research funding.

The analysis of existing studies shows that research often focuses on one type of impact of tourism (economic, social/cultural, environmental) or categorizes the impacts of tourism as either positive or negative. Previous research is conceptually inconsistent (Šegota, 2024), with social exchange theory being widely used (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2015) to gain insights into residents' perceptions of the impacts of tourism. As Hadinejad *et al.* (2019) report, previous studies differ on the determinants of residents' support for tourism development, highlighting the need for further research on residents' attitudes, especially in less explored areas.

Some communities value economic impacts more than social or environmental impacts (Styliadis *et al.*, 2014), while others are strongly influenced by perceptions of the social or environmental impacts of tourism (Long and Kayat, 2011). It is not uncommon for residents to simultaneously recognise the positive economic impacts of tourism (through job creation), and the prevalent strong negative impacts of daily contact with tourists (who compete for the same services, making them less accessible to residents) (Biagi *et al.*, 2020), and to oppose tourism development (Cardoso and Silva, 2018; Martin *et al.*, 2018). In general, it is perception of the economic benefits of tourism that largely explains residents' support (Hsu, *et al.*, 2019), especially among people who personally benefit from tourism in the form of jobs or business opportunities (Šegota *et al.*, 2017) but there are perception discrepancies between certain groups of residents (Bitsani and Kavoura, 2014). In the study of residents employed in tourism, Jurišić *et al.* (2019) found that the development of tourism is indirectly influenced by the awareness and perceived value of the destination's brand. However, residents who are employed in tourism or economically dependent on tourism are more critical of the impact of tourism than residents who are not economically linked to tourism (Vodeb *et al.*, 2021).

In fact, residents in economically depressed regions are more inclined to support tourism development and ignore its negative impacts because they perceive the potential economic benefits (Sorcaru *et al.*, 2022). Residents are likely to support tourism development if they perceive its impacts as positive (Almeida-Garcia *et al.*, 2016; Brida *et al.*, 2014; Gannon *et al.*, 2021; Lin *et al.*, 2017). The less positive perception of tourism impacts makes residents

less likely to support tourism development (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2019). If the impacts of tourism are perceived as negative, the local community will oppose the tourism development (Gursoy *et al.*, 2010; Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012). However, residents' support for further tourism development cannot be predicted by their perceptions of the negative impacts of tourism on the environment (Soldić Frleta and Smolčić Jurdana, 2023), nor is the impact of cultural attitudes and engagement confirmed to influence residents' perceptions of tourism development (Gannon *et al.*, 2021).

It is expected that the residents' involvement in tourism development gives them a better understanding of the potential benefits and enhance their emotional attachment to tourists (Erul *et al.*, 2020) and tourism in general. The attitude of residents results from the change in their well-being (Biagi *et al.*, 2020), and positive perceptions of tourism development support the process of value co-creation between residents and tourists (Lin *et al.*, 2017). Positive impacts of tourism on quality of life are often perceived as stronger than the negative ones, which could be related to the inadequate measurement items used to assess the negative impacts (Gursoy *et al.*, 2018) or less academic interest in identifying the negative externalities on daily quality of life (Bimonte *et al.*, 2019; Biagi *et al.*, 2020). Stronger perceptions of positive impacts lead to stronger support for tourism (Soldić Frleta and Đurkin Badurina, 2019), while residents' perceptions of tourism impacts influence the relationships between community attachment, environmental attitudes and economic gain (Gannon *et al.*, 2021). Liang and Hui (2016) reported that residents' attitudes depend on non-material improvements, their residential status and whether they perceive the destination as a place of work or residence.

The active involvement of residents in the development of the destination implies that they also recognize the costs of development, not just the potential benefits (Jurišić *et al.*, 2019). Nevertheless, being better informed about tourism activities does not necessarily mean greater support for tourism development (Soldić Frleta and Smolčić Jurdana, 2023). It is actually the degree of attachment to the community/place of residence that positively influences residents' awareness of the benefits of tourism (Adongo *et al.*, 2017; Brida *et al.*, 2014; Demirović Bajrami *et al.*, 2020; Lee, 2013; Moghavvemi *et al.*, 2017) and consequently can increase residents' support for tourism development (Gannon *et al.*, 2021). The duration of residence in an area also has a positive effect on the willingness to support tourism (Demirović Bajrami *et al.*, 2020; Gursoy *et al.*, 2018), with tourism development positively influencing various aspects of life (Uysal *et al.*, 2016).

The objective of this paper is not to distinguish the types of impacts of tourism (as in cases of the forementioned academic contributions) or to assess the degree of residents' involvement in tourism development. Rather, the aim is to examine how local residents perceive the different impacts of tourism (as determined by the methodology used) and whether there are differences in perception that depend on the sub-regional affiliation of respondents and indirectly on the level of tourism development in a sub-region. The working hypothesis is that the level of sub-regional tourism development is reflected in differences in attitudes towards tourism and perceptions of its impacts among the residents of the different sub-

regional attachment, especially in the less developed mountain region as opposed to the more developed coastal region and islands.

Considering the obvious differences in tourism development at the sub-regional level of the studied region (number of overnight stays, arrivals and tourism revenues) and in accordance with the funding received for this research, this paper adopts the EU-level methodological approach (*European Tourism Indicators System for sustainable destination management*) that recognizes the local population as one of the most important stakeholders for sustainable tourism development.

In addition to the literature review in this introductory section, the structure of the paper also consists of the analysis of the perception of the impacts of tourism by the residents of a generally well-developed and internationally recognised tourism region in the Research results section. This is preceded by a section describing the methodology, the case studied and the research sample. The presentation of the research results is followed by a Discussion and conclusion section as the final part of the paper.

2. METHODOLOGY, CASE STUDIED AND SAMPLING

This article analyses the perception of tourism by local communities. It attempts to identify the differences and similarities in attitudes in relation to the geographical sub-region in which the respondents live and the level of tourism development in the sub-region. Due to research funding, the research activities focused on Primorje-Gorski Kotar County in the Republic of Croatia – in its coastal, island and mountain parts. The following specific research objectives were set for a resident sample:

- to determine the level of residents' satisfaction with tourism;
- to determine the impact of tourism on aspects of daily life in the destination; and
- to determine whether there are differences in the perception of the impact of tourism development on the lives of the residents of the area.

2.1 Case study region: Primorje-Gorski Kotar County

Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (i.e., the Kvarner region) is a traditional tourist region of Croatia, situated on the northern Adriatic coast. The region recognises the great economic, social and cultural importance of tourism. The diverse attractions of its natural and historical heritage, tradition, climate, proximity and accessibility of the most important emission markets, geopolitical position and good transport network enable good market positioning of this geographically diverse destination. In its approach to promoting development, the county has recognised the specificities of its individual sub-regions: the islands, the coastline (Priobalje), and mountainous Gorski kotar, with their natural and man-made potentials. The internal differences between the identified sub-regions are particularly evident in tourist arrivals and overnight stays between the coast and the islands and the mountainous area (Državni zavod za statistiku, 2024a).

The numerous and diverse natural attractions and resources of these sub-regions are the basis for various tourist activities, and the natural values (beach facilities, landscape and nature) are the main motives for tourist arrivals, followed by the accessibility of the destination. The mountains and the islands are two micro-regions where a specific national development policy is being implemented. Mountain Areas Act (Hrvatski sabor, 2018a) and the Act on Assisted Areas (Hrvatski sabor, 2008) regulate development and provide legal framework for mitigating the difficulties caused by the specific working and living conditions in Gorski Kotar, and the Islands Act (Hrvatski sabor, 2018b) is intended for the islands.

All local self-government units of Gorski Kotar belong to the hilly and mountainous area, whose altitude, slope, vertical division of the terrain and the associated pedological, climatic and other natural conditions make the living and working conditions of its inhabitants difficult. This micro-region is characterized by an extremely unfavourable demographic situation, a low natural growth rate and a higher average age of the population. The tourism sector is underrepresented, but this sub-region is rich in preserved and protected natural resources that have the potential for tourism development (Regionalna razvojna agencija Primorsko-goranske županije, 2021). The standard of living is lower than in the coastal and island sub-regions.

Islands are specific territories due to their geographical location and the restrictions on connectivity or accessibility to which they are subject. According to the Development Index (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 2017), all local self-government units in this subregion are developed above average compared to the national level. According to the available data, more than two thirds of tourism in the county is realised on the islands, which corresponds to 58.69% of total overnight stays in the region, mainly by foreign visitors (Regionalna razvojna agencija Primorsko-goranske županije, 2021).

Tourism is an important economic sector for the islands and is an important part of the blue-green transition of the region. The development of tourism in Gorski kotar requires investment in tourist infrastructure and the realisation of additional activities to improve the offer and awareness of this sub-region.

The number of tourist arrivals in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County in 2023 was higher than in the previous year (a total of 3,071,852 arrivals), and the number of overnight stays was approximately at the same level (1,599,876) (Državni zavod za statistiku, 2024a). Regardless of the above-mentioned peculiarities, the islands and Gorski kotar with their natural and other potentials represent a well-integrated whole with the coast.

2. 2 Methodology and sampling

This research was funded by the project 'CEKOM - Centre of Competence for Smart Cities', funded by the European Union (2014-2020 Operational Programme Competitiveness and Cohesion). The survey was conducted in summer 2021. The attitudes of the respondents were collected using the online interview method (i.e., CAWI) by the market research company Ipsos. The total of 500 residents of the studied county took part in the survey.

The questionnaire is based on the 'Resident survey', which is part of the European Tourism Indicator System toolkit for sustainable destinations development (https://single-market-economy.ec.europa.eu/index_en). The survey consists of a total of 30 questions, many of which ask respondents to rank their answers on an appropriate scale. The first part contained the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, the second part consisted of questions/statements on the impacts of tourism and the third part related to the involvement of the local community in decision making. This paper focuses on the most important aspects of the data obtained in relation to the topic.

The sample was defined as an opportunity quota sample (Marušić *et al.*, 2019) with the aim of meeting the criterion of regional representativeness in the specified proportion: 79% of respondents were to live on the coast, 13% on the islands and 8% in the mountainous part of the county, which corresponds to the proportion of residents (265,419 in total) of the three sub-regions (Državni zavod za statistiku, 2021).

The structure of the sample can be found in Table 1. All respondents (a total of 50% men and 50% women) are between 18 and 65 years old. The majority, 72%, are in full-time employment. However, only 27% are economically dependent on tourism. The largest proportion of respondents working in tourism are involved in the provision of accommodation services.

Table 1. Sample structure

Sample / respondents' determinants		%
Sub-region	Islands	13
	Coastline	79
	Mountains	8
Gender	Male	50
	Female	50
Age	18-25	10
	26-35	27
	36-45	18
	46-55	26
	56-65	20
Work status	Employed, full time	72
	Employed, part time	3
	Part-time (freelance) job, temporary employment	4
	Student	7
	Retired	7
	Unemployed	8

Source: Authors

As for the several research limitations, the structure of the sample is to some extent influenced by the determinants of the 'Cekom – Centre of competences for Smart Cities' project, while it dictates the focus of the research on the studied region. However, focusing on a single region is not uncommon in previous research on residents' perceptions (e.g., Chen, 2020; Rizal *et al.*, 2020; Soldić Frleta and Smolčić Jurdana, 2023).

Although the online interview method (CAWI) also has some disadvantages (no control over the interview environment, no interviewer and consequently no possibility to give explanations and guide the interview), it has many more advantages from the perspective of the scope and objectives of this research (anonymity guarantee, no need for direct contact, elimination of the risk of errors, both on the part of the interviewer and the respondent, questionnaire can be sent to a large group of respondents). The disadvantages of quota sampling are also known, but this type of sample is best suited to take into account all the factors of the study and to achieve an adequate response rate. In addition, the survey was conducted in the summer, which could affect the responses of residents who are most affected by the increasing number of tourists in a destination at the time of the survey, regardless of whether they are involved in tourism or not.

Limitations can also be attributed to the 'Resident survey' in terms of the extent to which it captures the resident attitudes compared to existing academic research. The resident survey is part of an integrated approach to sustainable destination management at EU level and the conclusions presented in this paper relate to an original questionnaire adopted as part of the EU funding of the Cekom project. While the existing research in the field of residents' perceptions could also be criticised for the overall approach (Šegota *et al.*, 2024) or for being based on ad hoc questionnaires (Biagi *et al.*, 2020), the potential shortcomings of the Resident survey have been disregarded, while it is considered to offer a different perspective from the existing tools and models.



3. RESEARCH RESULTS

This article focuses on the perceptions of the stakeholder group of residents, which are differentiated according to the residents' attachment to a particular geographical part of a studied area. Residents of the Kvarner region are therefore divided into three groups, depending on whether they live on the coast, on the islands or in the mountains.

3.1 Satisfaction with tourism at the respondents' place of residence

Residents of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County rated their *satisfaction with tourism in their place of residence in relation to the individual seasons highest in the summer season (mean=3.9) and lowest in winter (mean=2.7)* - Table 2. Coastal residents are slightly more satisfied with winter tourism than island residents (mean=2.8, sig. 99% vs. mean=2.0, sig. 99%).

Table 2. Residents' level of satisfaction with tourism in a destination in relation to the time of year (on a scale from 1 – 'I strongly disagree' to 5 – 'I strongly agree')

Season	Total	Sub-region		
		coastline	islands	mountains
N	500	396	65	39
In autumn	3.2	3.2	3.1	2.9
In winter	2.7	2.8	2	2.9
In spring	3.4	3.5	3.2	3
In summer	3.9	3.9	4	3.3
Statistical significance compared to total – interpreting data				
		Larger than total		Smaller than total
				
		99%		99%
		95%		95%
		90%		90%

Source: Authors

In addition, coastal residents are more satisfied with tourism in spring (mean=3.5, sig. 99%) than mountain residents (mean=3.0, sig. 95%), which may be due to the earlier start of the season on the coast. Residents of the mountain region are less satisfied with summer tourism (mean=3.3, sig. 99%) than the residents of the coastal and island regions, although the number of arrivals (which is traditionally significantly lower) in the mountain region has increased in recent years (Državni zavod za statistiku, 2024b).

3. 2 Perception of benefits and resident involvement in tourism in the destination

Respondents also expressed their opinion on the extent of the benefits they themselves derive from tourism in their locality, the extent of the benefits to the community and the involvement of residents and their influence on the planning and development of tourism in the destination (Table 3).

Residents believe that the local community benefits more from tourism (mean=3.6) than the individual respondents themselves (mean=2.2), while satisfaction with involvement in tourism development is average (mean=2.7). Islanders perceive community benefits the most (mean=4.0, sig. 99%), more than residents in other areas of the county.

Table 3. Residents' perceptions of the extent of tourism benefits and residents' involvement in its development (on a scale from 1 – 'strongly disagree' to 5 – 'strongly agree')

Residents' perception	Total	Sub-region		
		coastline	islands	mountain
N	500	396	65	39
Tourism benefits the local community, as well as destination's visitors	3.6	3.6	4	3.3
I personally benefit from tourism and destination's visitors	2.2	2.1	3.3	1.8
I am overall satisfied with the resident involvement and influence on planning tourism development	2.7	2.7	2.9	2.3

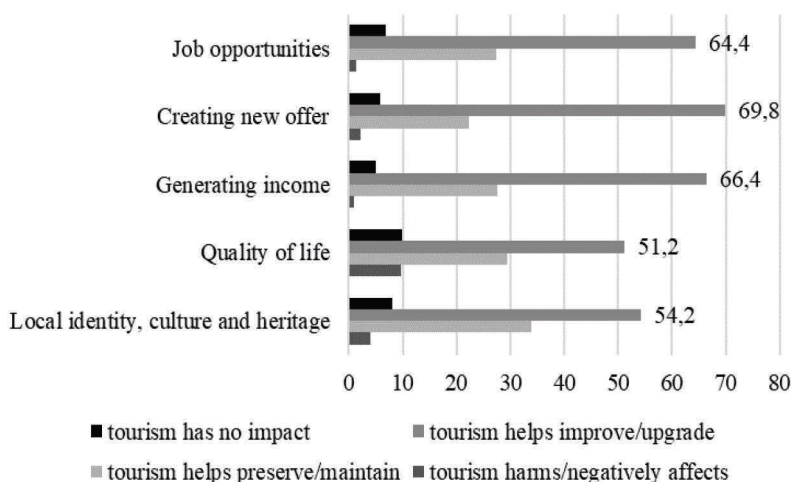
Source: Authors

Similarly, island residents recognise their personal benefits from tourism to a greater extent (mean=3.3, sig. 99%) than other county residents and in contrast to coastal residents (mean=2.1, sig. 99%). On the other hand, residents of the mountain sub-region feel the least involved in tourism development (mean=2.3, sig.95%).

3.3 Assessment of tourism impacts on residents' lives

Respondents were asked to assess the impact of tourism on the determinants of daily life in their place of residence.

Figure 1: Residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism on important aspects of life and activities in the destination



Source: Authors

In general, the impact of tourism is rated positively in all aspects (Figure 1), especially with regard to the creation of new forms of supply, income generation and employment opportunities. *The majority of respondents (over 50% for all aspects) believe that tourism leads to an improvement and enhancement of life and activities in a destination*, slightly fewer believe that it contributes to the preservation of these aspects, while up to 10% believe that tourism has no or a negative impact on the destination. Most residents recognise the positive effects of tourism through its economic potential (creation of new offers, income and jobs). The impact on quality of life is also predominantly perceived as positive, although with a higher proportion of residents who do not recognise the impact of tourism or see it as negative than is the case for other aspects. For most residents of the region, tourism enhances or preserves local identity, culture and heritage, and only a small percentage of residents recognise a negative impact on this aspect.

There are statistically significant differences between the inhabitants of the individual sub-regions of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County only with regard to the aspect of “employment opportunities (jobs) at the destination” (Table 4).

Table 4. Perceived impacts of tourism on important aspects of living at the destination in relation to the sub-region*

Tourism...	Local identity, culture and heritage			Quality of life			Generating income			Creating new offer			Job opportunities		
	C	I	M	C	I	M	C	I	M	C	I	M	C	I	M
harms / negatively affects	3.5	7.7	2.6	9.6	15.4	0	1.3	0	0	2.3	3.1	0	1.8	0	0
helps preserve / maintain	31.3	46.2	38.5	30.3	29.2	20.5	28	30.8	17.9	22.2	26.2	15.4	25.5	41.5	23.1
helps improve / upgrade	56.3	41.5	53.8	50.8	47.7	61.5	66.2	67.7	66.7	69.4	66.2	79.5	65.2	56.9	69.2
has no impact	8.8	4.6	5.1	9.3	7.7	17.9	4.5	1.5	15.4	6.1	4.6	5.1	7.6	1.5	7.7

*C=coast, I=islands, M=mountain region

Source: Authors

The residents of the islands (41.5%, sig. 95%) are of the opinion that tourism helps to maintain employment opportunities in their area.

3. 4 Negative impacts of tourism - residents' problems

With regard to tourism in the destination, respondents rated the negative aspects of tourism. Table 5 shows that the quality of service in catering establishments, overcrowding in sports and leisure facilities, safety aspects and noise at night are considered to be the least negative impacts of tourism from the point of view of the destination's residents. However, *aspects such as traffic, rising prices (of goods, services and property), waste disposal and crowded beaches or shops are the aspects through which the greatest negative impact of tourism are perceived.*

In contrast to the other residents of the region, the islanders believe that tourism has a greater negative impact, *especially in terms of rising prices for goods and services (mean=1.4, sig. 99%), traffic in general (mean=1.6, sig. 99%) and traffic organisation (mean=1.7, sig. 99%), crowded shops (mean=1.8, sig. 99%) and crowded public places (mean=1.9, sig. 99%)*. On the other hand, *the residents of the mountain region consider the unpleasant effects to be more moderate or lower, especially with regard to night-time noise (mean=3.0, sig. 99%), crowded cultural heritage sites (mean=3, sig. 95%), crowded beaches (mean=2.9, sig. 99%), crowded public spaces (mean=2.8, sig. 99%) or shops (mean=2.7, sig. 99%)*.

Table 5. Residents' problems related to the impact of tourism on life in the destination (mean)* on a scale from 1 - "strong negative impact"; 2 - "moderate negative impact"; to 3 - "low negative impact"; and 4 - "no negative impact"

Potentially negative impacts of tourism	Total	Sub-region		
		coastline	islands	mountains
N	500	396	65	39
Traffic (congestion, crowds, noise, emissions)	1.9	1.9	1.6	2.5
Traffic organization (parking, pedestrian areas, traffic management...)	2	2	1.7	2.5
The quality of establishments offering food/ drinks	3.2	3.2	3	3.4
Crowded beaches	2.1	2	2	2.9
Crowded public areas (streets, parks, playgrounds...)	2.4	2.4	1.9	2.8
Crowded shops	2.3	2.4	1.8	2.7
Crowded public transportation	2.5	2.5	2.3	2.7
Crowded sport and recreation facilities / services	3	3	2.8	3.1
Crowded heritage and cultural sites	2.6	2.6	2.6	3
Noise during the night	2.6	2.5	2.3	3
Safety issues	2.8	2.8	2.8	3
Overloaded waste disposal system (full bins, stench, lack of sorting)	2	2	1.8	2.5
Rising real estate prices	2	2	1.7	2.3
Rising prices of goods / services	1.9	2	1.4	2.3
Increased costs of transportation	2.5	2.5	2	2.7

*a higher average value means a lower negative impact of tourism

Source: Authors

As far as the perception of the inhabitants of the individual sub-regions with regard to the individual negative effects of tourism is concerned, a more detailed analysis based on the statistically significant differences found allows the following conclusions to be drawn.

While most of the islanders surveyed (55.4%, sig. 99%) perceive a strong negative impact of tourism on transport, the opinions of the residents of the mountain region are almost evenly split between a strong or moderate negative impact of tourism on transport (48.7%, sig. 95%) and little or no negative impact (51.3%, sig. 99%). Similarly, 50.8% of the islanders rated the impact of tourism on transport organisation as strongly negative (sig. 95%), while 51.3% of the mountain region residents rated it as low or non-existent (sig. 99%).

Residents of the mountain sub-region believe that tourism has little/no negative impact on the crowded beaches (sig. 99%), but 41% (sig. 95%) see strong/moderate negative impacts, which is surprising given the fact that there are only a handful of river/lakeside beaches in the area. The negative impact of tourism on crowded public areas is perceived as strong by 36.9% (sig. 99%) of the islanders, while 26.2% (sig. 95%) of them believe it is low or non-existent. A total of 78.5% (sig. 95%) of islanders also believe that tourism has a predominantly strong (47.7%) or moderate negative impact on overcrowding in shops, while 21.5% (sig. 95%) believe it is low.

No negative impact of tourism on night-time noise and overcrowding on public transport, as 38.5% (for each) is perceived by mountain area residents (sig. 99%). Mountain area residents believe that tourism has little or no negative impact (sig. 99%) on waste disposal overload - to a higher proportion than in the other sub-regions, while 17.9% (sig. 95%) believe the exact opposite (strong impact).

No less than 60% of islanders see a strong negative impact of rising prices for goods or services (99% sig). Regarding the rising cost of fuel, 40% (sig. 99%) of islanders believe that tourism has a strong negative impact on this aspect.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, residents show the greatest satisfaction with the summer season, regardless of their sub-regional affiliation. Compared to the attitudes of the other residents:

- mountain residents are most satisfied with winter tourism, but on average neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with year-round tourism;
- coastal residents are most satisfied with the periods before and after the main season (spring and autumn tourism);
- islanders are most satisfied in summer and their perception of winter tourism is the lowest level of satisfaction identified in this survey – they are not satisfied with winter tourism.

A positive perception of the impact of tourism on development enables residents and tourists to create shared value (Lin *et al.*, 2017) and strengthens support for tourism (Soldić Frleta

and Đurkin Badurina, 2019). Although not all residents are equally involved in “the “resident-tourist exchange” (Šegota *et al.*, 2017) and the impact of tourism is experienced subjectively (Uysal *et al.*, 2016), residents' support for tourism development has a direct impact on the overall quality of life of residents due to the perceived social impact (Ramkisson, 2023).

It has been found that the perception of (direct) individual benefits positively influences residents' support for tourism (Michalkó *et al.*, 2013). In this case, the individual benefits of tourism are best perceived by the islanders, as well as the community benefits and the active involvement of residents in tourism development. The community benefits top all resident groups' perception of tourism in their sub-regions. Mountain area residents are the least satisfied with their influence on tourism development planning and perceive the benefits of tourism to be the lowest compared to the other groups. However, residents' involvement has not been confirmed to influence resident perceptions of tourism development (Gannon *et al.*, 2021), although a better understanding of the potential benefits of tourism ensures their support (Erul *et al.*, 2020) and active participation. Even though residents' informedness does not necessarily lead to greater support (Soldić Frleta and Smolčić Jurdana, 2023), they should be aware of both the positive and negative aspects of tourism development (Jurišić *et al.*, 2019) and the residents in this study show that they are aware of both the positive and negative impacts as well as their own involvement.

From the perspective of the residents in this study, the economic benefits of tourism (more specifically, the impact on the creation of new supply, income and job creation) are perceived to be strongly supported by tourism in the destination. The results are consistent with previous studies showing that perceptions of economic benefits largely explain residents' support (Hsu *et al.*, 2019) and that communities value economic impacts more than social or environmental impacts (Stylidis *et al.*, 2014). The statistically significant differences are only found in the aspect of employment opportunities, with the highest proportion of islanders believing that tourism contributes to maintaining employment opportunities.

Residents of some areas do not necessarily believe that tourism affects their lifestyle or culture (Gannon *et al.*, 2021), and their attitudes towards the impact of tourism on their quality of life depend on non-material improvements (Demirović Bajrami *et al.*, 2020; Liang and Hui, 2016). However, this study shows that the impact on quality of life is predominantly perceived as positive. The proportion of residents who do not recognise the impact of tourism or perceive it as negative is higher than in the perception of other aspects by residents. Furthermore, for most residents of the region, local identity, culture and heritage are either enhanced or preserved by tourism, with only a small percentage of residents recognising a negative impact on this aspect. More specifically, the social aspects of local identity, culture and heritage are perceived to be preserved or enhanced by tourism. Islanders also stand out for their perception of negative effects on quality of life compared to other groups. The largest proportion of mountain area dwellers believe that tourism has no impact on quality of life and income generation. In some cases, residents of economically underdeveloped regions are more inclined to support tourism development and ignore its negative impacts (Sorcaru *et al.*, 2022).

While residents' attitudes towards tourists are largely influenced by their perception of the impact of tourism on their quality of life, the lack of accessibility of services, which affects their quality of life if not properly managed (Biagi *et al.*, 2020), cannot be ignored. Traffic (congestion, crowds, noise, emissions), rising prices (of goods, services and real estate), waste problems, traffic organisation (parking, pedestrian zones, traffic management) and crowded beaches, shops and other public areas (streets, parks, playgrounds) are the aspects through which the inhabitants of Kvarner perceive the greatest negative effects of tourism in this case.

Island residents perceive strong or moderate negative impact on all these aspects, more than other groups, with the exception of waste management. However, noise is another negative impact of tourism in their area. Mountain residents have a lower awareness of the negative impacts of tourism, with most aspects being perceived as moderate or low. This study has shown that the inhabitants of the underdeveloped sub-region are hardly aware of the negative impacts of tourism. As this is a mountain and forest area, only proper management of the tourism destination and appropriate development planning can help to avoid further negative (especially environmental) impacts of tourism such as pollution, waste and overcrowding (Goliath-Ludic and Yekela, 2020).

The working hypothesis of this study was that the level of subregional tourism development is reflected in differences in attitudes towards tourism and perceptions of its impact among the inhabitants of the different sub-regional attachment, especially in the less developed mountain region as opposed to the more developed coastal region and islands. The research results have shown that the impact of tourism is perceived differently depending on which sub-region the respondents belong to, and that both positive and negative impacts are perceived differently. This could be influenced by geographic features, the maturity of tourism and residents' habituation to it, and therefore the awareness of the benefits of tourism or the perceived negatives at a sub-regional level.

In the least developed tourism area, for example, the impact of tourism is perceived less negatively and the impact on important aspects of life and activities in the destination is predominantly seen as positive, especially in terms of the creation of new services, employment and income opportunities and living standards. Nevertheless, residents of mountain region are the least satisfied with tourism in terms of season, and believe that residents' participation in tourism development is insufficient. Residents of more developed sub-regions with a longer tradition of tourism and greater tourist activity are more satisfied with tourism at the destination (coastal residents) and are more aware of its social and individual benefits (islanders). However, the islanders also perceive a stronger negative influence of tourism on the problems of the local population.

In line with the above, the thesis of this research seems coherent and valid. Nevertheless, future research should examine the context of residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism - the determinants of perceptions and attitudes and their foundation in local attachment, sub-regional specific features, individual or social aspects of residents' lives, the level of tourism development and the level of involvement in tourism. Knowledge of the factors influencing

residents' decisions, attitudes and perceptions would support the planning and management of destination development and potentially help to reduce disproportions in the level of tourism development between sub-regions.

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STAVOVI I PERCEPCIJE LOKALNOG STANOVNIŠTVA O UTJECAJIMA TURIZMA

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SAŽETAK

Svrha ovog rada je istražiti stavove i percepciju ključnih dionika razvoja turističke destinacije o utjecajima turizma, s ciljem utvrđivanja percipira li lokalno stanovništvo različito utjecaje turizma ako žive u različitim dijelovima nejednako razvijene turističke regije. Na temelju stavova 500 stalnovnika ciljne regije prikupljenih CAWI metodom, rezultati istraživanja sugeriraju da postoje razlike u percepciji utjecaja turizma u kontekstu subregionalne pripadnosti ispitanika. Stanovnici nerazvijene planinske subregije nisu svjesni nekih utjecaja turizma, dok se isti utjecaji percipiraju kao negativni u obalnom dijelu ili na otocima. Unatoč činjenici da se regija općenito smatra uspješnom i razvijenom turističkom destinacijom (mjereno brojem noćenja, dolazaka i prihodima od turizma), rezultati ovog istraživanja relevantni su za planiranje i upravljanje razvojem regionalnog turizma. Percepcija lokalnog stanovništva indicira kojim bi utjecajima turizma trebalo bolje upravljati (negativni utjecaji), kojima se adekvatno upravlja (pozitivni utjecaji), te kojima treba dati prioritet (koji se ne percipiraju ni kao pozitivni ni kao negativni utjecaji) te bi stoga zabilježeni stavovi lokalnog stanovništva neizravno mogli pomoći u smanjenju disproporcija u razvoju turizma između subregija, ukoliko uvaženi od donositelja odluka.

Ključne riječi: percepcija stanovnika, utjecaji turizma, geografska raznolikost, razvoj turizma

