

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOURISM IMPACTS, HAPPINESS AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the impacts of tourism on the happiness of the local community in Mauritius. A study on happiness is important since in recent years, it has been acknowledged that the contributions of tourism should not be measured in economic terms alone. It is important to look at the long-term contributions of tourism and the development of an industry such as tourism should seek more significant and broader outcomes for its population. Hence, its relationship to happiness cannot be overlooked because studies have shown that happy people are more likely to perform positive activities and display optimistic behaviours that benefit societies at large. The study uses a quantitative approach through the use of a questionnaire. The quantitative data for this study were collected from a sample of 600 local residents in Mauritius. It was found that two factors, namely economic impacts, and local services significantly and positively influenced community happiness and support for tourism mainly due to the considerable economic dependence and significance of the tourism industry for Mauritius. Contrastingly, health and well-being impacts negatively influenced community happiness and resident's support for future tourism development. Other tourism impacts did not directly significantly influence happiness and the residents' perceptions of future tourism development.

**Key words:** Happiness, Tourism Impacts, Community, Wellbeing, Mauritius

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## INTRODUCTION

Happiness is believed to be a vital developmental goal and there is sufficient proof that happy individuals are healthier and more productive (Croes, Rivera & Semrad, 2017). Diener (2000) and Veenhoven (2005) also explained that happy people are more likely to perform positive activities and display optimistic behaviours that benefit societies at large. Empirical studies advocate that happiness is strongly associated with numerous successful life outcomes, such as, good health, better income and stronger community relationships (De Neve, Diener, Tay, & Xuereb, 2013; Rivera, Croes & Lee, 2016). Scholars argue that is important for a destination to actively pursue the well-being of its citizens (Naidoo & Ramseook-Munhurrn, 2019; Rivera *et al.* 2016). Despite tourism being a dominant industry in SIDS, scant research has been undertaken into the specific contribution of tourism to happiness of residents (Naidoo et al., 2017).

Tourism development does not only bring about economic costs and benefits but also generates non-economic ones, which should be considered. The non-economic aspect of tourism development has been greatly overlooked in early literature. Recent studies such as Rivera *et al.* (2016), Ozturk, Ozer and Caliskan (2015) and Kafashpor, Ganji, Sadeghian and Johnson (2018) focus on the impact of tourism development on residents' happiness and these impacts are not only economic but also bring contributions to other spheres of an individual's life. However, there is a dearth of literature when it comes to the relationship between tourism development and happiness and this study focuses on examining the impact of tourism development on the residents' happiness in Mauritius.

Rivera *et al.* (2016) contend that examining the nature of how tourism development impacts on residents' happiness is a relevant policy question. Government decisions have a wide ranging impact on the lives of individuals in a community. Governments of small island developing states (SIDS) view tourism as a panacea for development (Sharpley, 2002) and hence embark on tourism as a viable option for current and future development. However, governments are accustomed to their success or failure being evaluated according to measures of economic growth (Sharpley & Naidoo, 2016). Increasing evidence show that communities around the world believe that happiness is an important government goal to pursue (Naidoo et al., 2017). The purpose of this paper is to consider the impacts of tourism development in influencing community happiness in Mauritius.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Tourism Impacts**

One of the positive economic impacts of tourism is the increase in employment opportunities, which in turn lead to an increase in income for the residents (Andereck & Nyupane, 2011). Another positive impact of tourism development is its effect on local businesses, infrastructure and public facilities and to increase investment (Kim, Uysal & Sirgy, 2013). Positive economic impacts are said to influence residents' perceptions and often supports the main reason for tourism development in a destination (Dyer et al., 2007). These impacts urge governments to choose the tourism sector as an economic development strategy in many regions of the world.

Tourism development has a positive impact on community services and expands the range of leisure and recreational activities of a destination (Andereck & Vogt, 2000). Wang, Fu, Cecil & Avgoustis (2006) added that tourism also helps in revitalizing cultures when fading customs are revived for tourists. Furthermore, tourism development can result in increased social ills such as vandalism, delinquency, gambling, begging, prostitution, drug trafficking and serious crime (Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; Andereck et al., 2005) leading to deterioration in traditional culture of that destination (Kim, Uysal & Sirgy, 2013). The positive environmental impacts of tourism development comprise of an increased effort to preserve natural resources and to enhance public spaces as well as the destination as a whole (Andereck et al., 2005). The most popular destinations also face the problem of overcrowding and threatens the wildlife habitats (Mason, 2008).

### **Happiness**

Happiness is said to be a feeling or an emotion, or it is perhaps established by a set of judgments or attitudes (that a person's life is going well and that his/her main desires are fulfilled) (Sizer, 2010). Diener (1984) also stressed that level of subjective happiness is closely associated to the balance of positive and negative affect and overall life satisfaction. Subjective happiness is something desired and is considered as a state of mind or feeling depicted by pleasure or satisfaction (Lin, Lin, & Wu, 2010). Nowadays, happiness is extremely valued as not only do individual wish for happiness in their personal lives but because it is believed that governments should have as aim to create happiness for its citizens (Veenhoven, 2009).

## **Methodology**

The study uses a quantitative approach with the use of a questionnaire. A sample of 600 questionnaires was distributed to a convenience sample of residents in different parts of the island. The questions for tourism development were derived from Croes et al. (2017), Eshliki and Kaboudi (2012), Faulkner and Tideswell (1997), Gabriel, Osti and Faccioli (2011), Ozturk et al. (2015), and Yu, Cole and Chancellor (2018). The questions in Section A measure tourism development in Mauritius and cover five major domains: economic impacts (Ozturk et al., 2015; Yu et al., 2018; Croes, Rivera & Semrad, 2016; Rivera et al., 2015; Kim, Uysal & Sirgy, 2012; Eshliki & Kaboudi, 2012; Kafashpor, Ganji, Sadeghian & Johnson, 2018). Section B evaluates the happiness of the respondents based on 16 items (Croes et al., 2016). The questionnaires were administered face-to-face and the data collection took 3 months, from September 2019 to December 2019. 464 questionnaires were collected, representing a response rate of 77.3%. The data was coded and analysed using SPSS version 21 and linear regression were used.

## **RESULTS**

### **Relationship between Tourism Impacts and Community Happiness**

A regression analysis was conducted to see if tourism impacts predicted community happiness (Table 1). Community happiness was used as a dependent variable and the five tourism impacts were used as independent variables. The  $R^2$  is 0.044 which revealed that a relationship existed and accounted for 4.4% of the variance. The five independent variables showed 4.4% of variance in the dependent variable. Here, a weak relationship between the variables of tourism impact and community happiness indicated that the perceived effect of tourism on Mauritian residents' happiness is not direct, that is, the perception of tourism impacts did not directly influence the community happiness. In addition, the F ratio of 4.189 was significant. The findings revealed that only 3 factors, namely economic, health and well-being, and local services significantly influenced community happiness. However, the findings further revealed that only economic and local services positively and significantly influenced community happiness, while health and well-being had a negative and significant influence on community happiness. The strongest positive effect was observed for 'local services impacts' ( $\beta=0.099$ ), followed by 'economic impacts' ( $\beta=0.091$ ), and negative 'health and well-being impacts' ( $\beta= -.098$ ) had a negative influence on community happiness. The significant positive effect of the economic impacts of tourism on community happiness is very likely due to the high economic dependence on tourism. The economic weight of tourism is perceived

very important by people working in the sector. Moreover, the Mauritian residents believe that tourism has a positive impact on local services in general, as there is an increase in entertainment opportunities, well maintained roads and local services as well as availability of medical services in their community, thus positively and significantly influencing their happiness. On the other hand, the findings revealed that community happiness is negatively impacted by the health and well-being impacts caused by tourism activities in Mauritius as the residents tend to have negative perceptions of tourism's impacts on adoption of healthy lifestyle, pollution, community safety, and construction of hotels and facilities reduces access to recreational spaces for locals.

**Table 1:** Relationship between Tourism Impacts and Community Happiness

Dependent variable	Independent variable	$\beta$	t-value	Sig
Happiness	Economic	.091	1.651	.099**
	Social-Cultural	-.042	-.822	.412
	Environmental	.056	1.151	.250
	Health and Well-Being	-.098	-2.051	.041*
	Local services	.099	1.766	.078**

$R^2 = .044$ ;  $F = 4.189$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ;  $p^* \leq 0.05$ ;  $p^{**} \leq 0.1$

### **Relationship between Tourism Impacts and Tourism Development**

Another regression analysis was conducted to see if tourism impacts have an influence on tourism development (Table 2). Tourism development was used as a dependent variable and the five tourism impacts were used as independent variables. The  $R^2$  is 0.182 which revealed that a relationship existed and accounted for 18.2% of the variance. The five independent variables showed 18.2% of variance in the dependent variable. Here, a weak relationship between the variables of tourism impact and tourism development indicated that the perceived effect of tourism on tourism development in Mauritian, that is, the perception of tourism impact did not directly influence tourism development. In addition, the F ratio of 20.393 was significant. The findings indicated that only economic, and local services had a positive and significance influence on tourism development, while

health and well-being had a negative and significant influence on tourism development. The strongest positive effect was observed for ‘local services impact’ ( $\beta=0.254$ ) followed by ‘economic impacts’ ( $\beta= .234$ ), while ‘health and well-being impacts’ ( $\beta= -.087$ ) had a negative influence on tourism development.

**Table 2:** Relationship between Tourism Impacts and Tourism Development

Dependent variable	Independent variable	B	t-value	Sig
Tourism Development	Economic	.234	4.594	.000*
	Social-Cultural	-.069	-1.459	.145
	Environmental	.004	.083	.934
	Health and Well-Being	-.087	-1.974	.049**
	Local services	.254	4.890	.000*

$R^2 = .182$ ;  $F = 20.393$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ;  $p^* \leq 0.01$ ;  $p^{**} \leq 0.05$

### **Relationship between Tourism Impacts, Happiness and Tourism Development**

A regression analysis was conducted to see if tourism impacts, and community happiness have an influence on tourism development (Table 3). Tourism development was used as a dependent variable and the five tourism impacts, and community happiness were used as independent variables. The  $R^2$  is 0.475 which revealed that a relationship existed and accounted for 47.5% of the variance. The five independent variables showed 47.5% of variance in the dependent variable. In addition, the F ratio of 22.230 was significant. The findings indicated that only economic, local services and community happiness had a positive and significance impact on tourism development (Table xxx). The strongest positive effect was observed for ‘local services impacts’ ( $\beta=0.233$ ), followed by ‘economic impacts’ ( $\beta= 0.215$ ) and ‘community happiness’ ( $\beta= 0.214$ ). Hence,  $H_3$  is partially supported.

**Table 3:** Relationship between Tourism Impacts, Happiness and Tourism Development

Dependent variable	Independent variable	$\beta$	t-value	Sig
Tourism Development	Economic	.215	4.312	.000*
	Social-Cultural	-.060	-1.302	.193
	Environmental	-.008	-.189	.851
	Health and Well-Being	-.066	-1.532	.126
	Local services	.233	4.585	.000*
	Community Happiness	.214	5.087	.000*

$R^2 = .475$ ;  $F = 22.230$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ;  $p^* \leq 0.01$

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine residents' perceptions of tourism impacts, community happiness and support for future tourism development. The study shows that residents perceived higher economic impacts and better local services arising from tourism development. From an economic perspective, the findings indicate that residents mostly agree that tourism creates good employment opportunities for locals and new enterprises in the community. Several studies have also reported similar positive results which in turn lead to an increase in income for the residents (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011; Bujosa & Rosselló, 2007; Chen, 2000; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Suntikul et al., 2016; Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001). The findings also revealed that respondents perceived that tourism stimulates the creation and growth of new enterprises in their community comparable to the study of Naidoo and Sharpley (2016) conducted in the same destination. The findings of the current study are similar to past scholarly research where the economic benefits of tourism were found to be important for residents (Moyle et al., 2013; Haralambopoulos & Pizam, 1996; King et al., 1993; Lindberg & Johnson, 1997).

As suggested by the literature, one of the most evident impacts of tourism development in a destination is the economic impacts. The current study also revealed the impacts on local services and results indicate that residents are of the opinion that tourism has led to a better standard of services provided by shops,

restaurants and other areas of commerce, there was better police protection, and increased availability of medical services, for example, hospitals, clinics, emergency care and that tourism has also provided additional entertainment opportunities in their community. Studies such as Suntikul et al. (2016) have also shown that residents' perceived that tourism development increases the level of services such as better police protection and quality of roads. Other studies have also shown that tourism leads to a set of improvements in community infrastructure and public facilities (Andereck & Vogt, 2000; Andereck et al., 2005; Belisle & Hoy, 1980; Korca, 1996; Mason & Cheyne, 2000; Saveriades, 2000; Sheldon & Var, 1984; Yoon et al., 2001). The findings of the current study partly support empirical evidence provided in these scholarly work.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The study indicated that locals were in general happy with their lives and were looking forward to future development although they perceived that some groups of the population may be benefiting more out of tourism development. The study tested the relationship between tourism impacts and community happiness and the findings indicate that tourism impacts did not directly influence community happiness. The study showed the extent of the influence of tourism impacts on community happiness and the relationship was perceived to be weak. The results suggest that some factors have a positive impact on happiness whereas other factors had an adverse effect on happiness. The findings reveal that only three factors, namely economic, health and well-being, and local services significantly influenced community happiness. However, only economic and local services positively and significantly influenced community happiness, while health and well-being had a negative influence on community happiness.

Moreover, the study also sought to determine if there was a relationship between tourism impacts and tourism development and it was found that tourism impacts did not directly influence support for future tourism development. The strongest positive effect was observed for 'local services impact' followed by 'economic impacts' while 'health and well-being impacts' had a negative influence on support for tourism development. Previous studies have also suggested that residents' positive perception of economic impacts lead to greater support for further development (Stylidis et al., 2014). Moreover, the study of Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011) also showed that there was a relationship between community services and support for tourism development. The current study also examined the relationship between tourism impacts, community happiness and support for future



tourism development. Residents perceive that tourism impacts influence community happiness and tourism development in Mauritius to a certain extent. The findings indicated that only economic impacts, local services and community happiness had a positive and significance impact on future tourism development. As mentioned by Ozturk, Ozer & Çaliskan (2015), residents will endorse tourism development in their community only if they feel that tourism activities bring along economic benefits to their community. If the economic costs of tourism are higher than the economic benefits, residents will be more likely to support tourism development.

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