

1990

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Tim Schroeder
Northern Arizona University

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Schroeder, Tim (1990) "Preliminary Assessment of the Social Impacts of Tourism in Flagstaff, Arizona," *Visions in Leisure and Business*: Vol. 9 : No. 2 , Article 5.
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PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE SOCIAL IMPACTS OF TOURISM
ON FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA

BY

DR. TIM SCHROEDER, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

RECREATION AND LEISURE SERVICES PROGRAM
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND RECREATION
NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY
NAU BOX 15095
FLAGSTAFF, ARIZONA 86011

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of residents of Flagstaff, Arizona of the impacts of tourism on their community. The sample consisted of 203 residents who were interviewed about their perceptions of 30 impacts of tourism. The main perceived impacts were identified and the relationship of these impacts of socioeconomic characteristics were determined. Differences were also determined between the perceptions of hospitality industry employees and others. Finally the specific impacts that were most significantly related to the overall impact on the quality of life were determined using multiple regression.

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INTRODUCTION

Most communities have placed great emphasis on the economic impacts of tourism as a justification for public investment in tourism. Tourism has been viewed as a clean industry which provides thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of economic activity.

The social impacts of tourism have typically gotten much less attention. Not only do the economies of tourist destinations change due to growth of tourism, but the social conditions in the communities also change, in both positive and negative ways. For instance, in the Cape Cod area it was found that tourism was perceived to result in negative impacts, such as increased traffic congestion, crime, and noise as well as positive social changes, such as improved shopping opportunities and recreational/cultural opportunities.(6) Other studies have had similar results.(2, 3, 4, 7, 8)

Researchers have also recognized that subgroups within the host population may be impacted by tourism differently. Thomason et al. (9)

found that entrepreneurs had the most positive attitudes about winter visitors to Corpus Christi, Texas than the general public, but that the general public also had very positive attitudes about those visitors. Long and Allen (5) found that the resident perceptions of tourism's impacts tended to be much more positive if the level of tourist development was lower. As the level of tourist development increased, residents expressed more negative perceptions of impacts due to tourism. Brougham and Butler (1) identified subgroups within a tourist impacted population in Scotland with both positive and negative perceptions of impacts, challenging the common belief that all residents should have positive attitudes toward tourism development. Based upon the results of their study of tourism's impacts, Liu et al. (4) recommended that the monitoring of resident opinion was a very necessary part of the tourism planning process.

Previous studies on host population's perceptions of tourism's impacts have focused on one point in time. Research has not been identified which has tracked changes in social impacts on a longitudinal basis.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

A long-range goal of the researcher was to longitudinally measure changes in citizen's perceptions of impacts as the volume and nature of tourism changes. The immediate purpose of this study was to provide a baseline assessment of those perceptions. The project recognized that Flagstaff's growing tourism activity offers an opportunity to study the social, environmental and economic impacts of tourism.

The study focused upon four research questions:

- (1) Identifying the positive and negative impacts of tourism as perceived by residents of the community.
- (2) Assessing the relationships of those impacts to socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents.
- (3) Determining the relationships of specific perceived impacts to the perception of the overall impact of tourism.
- (4) Determining whether employment in the hospitality field is related to differences in the perceptions of tourism's impacts.

The results of the study could be applied by appropriate public and private sector groups to develop educational programs to increase public acceptance of the growth of tourism and to identify areas where problem interventions should be focused.

METHODOLOGY

A representative sample of 203 households was systematically sampled

from the Flagstaff telephone directory. The subjects were interviewed by students from Northern Arizona University during July of 1989, using an interview format patterned after the questionnaire used by Pizam.(6) Respondents rated the impact of tourism on 30 quality of life dimensions. A scale ranging from -5 to +5 was used. Respondents also supplied basic socio-economic data.

RESULTS

A mean rating was calculated for each of the 30 impact dimensions on the survey, thus providing a measure of the collective perceptions of the community on each type of impact. (Table 1) Positive perceptions were found for seven impacts, with mean ratings greater than 1.0. Those positive impacts were: Opportunity for Jobs (+1.22), Opportunity for Shopping (+1.42), Quality of Fire Protection (+1.10), Understanding Different People (+1.49), Quality of Health Care (+1.01), Availability of Cultural Arts (+2.25), and Overall Quality of Life (+1.70). Negative perceptions were found for seven other impacts, with mean ratings smaller than -1.0. Those negative impacts were: Traffic and Road Conditions (-2.73), General Prices for Goods and Services (-1.15), Future Use of Forests (-1.01), Noise (-1.53), Litter (-2.20), Air Quality (-1.07) and Occurrences of Crime (-1.08).

Socioeconomic factors had varied relationships to ratings of impacts. Sex of the respondent was not significantly related to ratings on any of the 30 impacts (Table 2). Married respondents had more positive ratings for the impact on the quality of health care than non-married respondents (Table 3). Respondents who had lived in the community 6 years or longer were more negative about traffic impacts than newer residents (Table 4). Ethnic minorities were less negative toward the impact of tourism on litter than non-minorities (Table 5). Respondents with children in the home were significantly different in their ratings of three impacts than people without children. The respondents with children were more positive about opportunities for jobs, more negative about the impact of noise, and more positive about the impact on the quality of health care (Table 6). Income was the socioeconomic factor most related to variation in responses. Mean responses on 8 variables differed for income groups, including opportunity for jobs, income of residents, future use of parks and recreation areas, noise, litter, standard of living, quality of health care, and availability of cultural arts programs (Table 7).

Based on past studies and conventional wisdom, a relationship which might have been predicted was that people who were employed in the hospitality field would be more positive about the impacts of tourism than those who do not benefit as directly from tourism jobs. The sample included about 20 percent who reported that someone in their household worked at a restaurant, hotel or some other business which served primarily tourists. The analysis found that these "hospitality industry" respondents were not significantly different in their ratings of any of the 30 impacts (Table 8).

A final phase of the analysis was to determine which of the 29

specific impacts of tourism were most strongly related to the overall rating of the impact of tourism on the quality of life in Flagstaff. A multiple regression was used to determine which of these impacts were significantly related in a multivariate context to overall impact on the quality of life. It was found that six of the variables were significantly related to overall quality of life, accounting for 42.7 percent of the variation (Table 9). These six specific impacts were: Standard of Living for Residents; Future Use of Parks; Quality of Fire Protection; Occurrences of Crime; Changes in Community Values, Norms and Customs; and Population Density.

DISCUSSION

For the most part, the major impacts perceived by residents of Flagstaff are not a surprise. The findings were consistent with previous studies and with casual observations made in the community by the researcher and colleagues. The positive evaluation of the impact of tourism on quality of fire protection was a little difficult to understand. This may have been related to the fact that during the time of data collection there was a very high danger of forest fires in the area, which was very much on the minds of residents of the community.

It was surprising that the respondents did not perceive tourism to have a positive impact on real estate taxes. One of the chief benefits that local government officials must identify would be that the sales taxes from tourist purchases help provide governmental services for which the local taxpayer would otherwise pay. Perhaps this indicated a lack of understanding of local government tax revenues and the need for more educational efforts on this impact.

An interesting finding was that people employed in the hospitality industry expressed no significant differences in perceptions of impacts from others. With their livelihoods depending on the expenditures of tourists, one might have expected that hospitality employees would more readily recognize the benefits of tourism and be more willing to accept the negative impacts.

Further study of the impacts of tourism on Flagstaff is needed, particularly as local government invests tax monies in the expansion of the tourism economy. By identifying those areas of negative impact, involved agencies and organizations can intervene with educational programs, changes in operations and programs to either modify the impacts or change the perceptions of those impacts.

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Table 1
Mean and Standard Deviation for Each Perceived Impact

Impact	Mean	Standard Dev.
Availability of housing	-0.25	2.16
Cost of land and housing	-0.42	2.57
Traffic and road conditions	-2.73	2.74
Population density	-0.11	2.27
Availability of recreational facilities	+0.54	2.61
Opportunity for jobs	+1.22	2.91
Employment fluctuations	-0.03	2.41
Income of residents	+0.65	2.60
Changes in community values, norms and customs	+0.15	2.02
Opportunity for shopping	+1.42	2.38
General prices for goods and services	-1.15	2.50
Quality of fire protection	+1.10	2.13
Quality of police protection	+0.96	2.49
Real estate tax rate	-0.35	2.00
Future use of mountains	-0.94	2.82
Future use of forests	-1.01	2.83
Future use of parks	+0.06	2.81
Future of hunting and fishing	-0.36	2.66
Quality of air	-1.07	2.87
Noise	-1.53	2.48
Litter	-2.20	2.64
Standard of living for residents	+0.69	2.27
Understanding different people	+1.49	1.94
Occurrences of drug/alcohol abuse	-0.78	2.18
Occurrences of crime	-1.08	2.67
Quality of public education	+0.71	1.84
Quality of health care	+1.01	1.78
Unemployment	+0.16	2.15
Availability of cultural arts	+2.25	1.80
Overall quality of life for residents	+1.70	2.48

* p<.05

Table 2
Mean Ratings of Impacts by Sex of Respondent

Impact	Female	Male	T value
Availability of housing	-0.30	-0.18	-0.407
Cost of land and housing	-0.47	-0.37	-0.283
Traffic and road conditions	-2.67	-2.81	0.358
Population density	-0.16	-0.06	-0.320
Availability of recreational facilities	+0.53	+0.54	-0.036
Opportunity for jobs	+1.04	+1.44	-0.983
Employment fluctuations	+0.03	-0.10	0.374
Income of residents	+0.62	+0.68	-0.158
Changes in community values, norms and customs	+0.30	-0.04	1.231
Opportunity for shopping	+1.23	+1.67	-1.328
General prices for goods and services	-1.01	-1.32	0.895
Quality of fire protection	+1.34	+0.81	1.770
Quality of police protection	+1.21	+0.64	1.624
Real estate tax rate	-0.44	-0.24	-0.726
Future use of mountains	-1.07	-0.78	-0.738
Future use of forests	-1.11	-0.88	-0.573
Future use of parks	+0.23	-0.14	0.952
Future of hunting and fishing	-0.28	-0.46	0.458
Quality of air	-0.97	-1.20	0.564
Noise	-1.33	-1.78	1.307
Litter	-2.20	-2.20	0.014
Standard of living of residents	+0.63	+0.77	-0.424
Understanding different people	+1.51	+1.46	0.206
Occurrences of drug/alcohol abuse	-0.85	-0.69	-0.424
Occurrences of crime	-1.01	-1.17	0.420
Quality of public education	+0.68	+0.76	-0.286
Quality of health care	+1.16	+0.82	1.339
Unemployment	-0.01	+0.38	-1.287
Availability of cultural arts	+2.30	+2.18	0.484
Overall quality of life for residents	+1.94	+1.40	1.528

* $p < .05$

Table 3

Mean Ratings of Impacts by Marital Status of Respondents

Impact	Married	Not Married	T value
Availability of housing	-0.29	-0.20	-0.285
Cost of land and housing	-0.47	-0.37	-0.269
Traffic and road conditions	-3.00	-2.46	-1.416
Population density	-0.38	+0.16	-1.692
Availability of recreational facilities	+0.36	+0.73	-1.017
Opportunity for jobs	+1.49	+0.94	1.352
Employment fluctuations	+0.14	-0.20	0.995
Income of residents	+0.71	+0.58	0.373
Changes in community values, norms and customs	0.00	+0.30	-1.072
Opportunity for shopping	+1.39	+1.47	-0.239
General prices for goods and services	-1.17	-1.12	-0.148
Quality of fire protection	+1.31	+0.89	1.403
Quality of police protection	+0.96	+0.96	0.006
Real estate tax rate	-0.40	-0.30	-0.383
Future use of mountains	-0.89	-0.99	0.241
Future use of forests	-1.03	-0.98	-0.123
Future use of parks	-0.05	+0.18	-0.579
Future of hunting and fishing	-0.46	-0.25	-0.559
Quality of air	-0.86	-1.30	1.115
Noise	-1.49	-1.57	0.216
Litter	-2.23	-2.06	-0.718
Standard of living of residents	+0.73	+0.65	0.264
Understanding different people	+1.43	+1.55	-0.414
Occurrences of drug/alcohol abuse	-0.89	-0.65	-0.785
Occurrences of crime	-1.07	-1.09	0.063
Quality of public education	+0.88	+0.55	1.280
Quality of health care	+1.27	+0.74	2.163
*			
Unemployment	+0.39	-0.08	1.584
Availability of cultural arts	+2.34	+2.15	0.732
Overall quality of life for residents	+1.87	+1.53	0.981

* $p < .05$

Table 4

Mean Ratings of Impacts by Length of Residence of Respondents

Impact	Length of Residence		T value
	5 Years or Less	6 Years or More	
Availability of housing	-0.42	-0.11	-1.029
Cost of land and housing	-0.46	-0.40	-0.158
Traffic and road conditions	-2.27	-3.11	2.148 *
Population density	+0.01	-0.21	0.704
Availability of recreational facilities	+0.78	+0.35	1.190
Opportunity for jobs	+1.14	+1.28	-0.336
Employment fluctuations	+0.03	-0.08	0.338
Income of residents	+0.70	+0.60	0.270
Changes in community values, norms and customs	+0.41	-0.06	1.704
Opportunity for shopping	+1.27	+1.55	-0.852
General prices for goods and services	-1.02	-1.25	0.642
Quality of fire protection	+1.18	+1.04	0.446
Quality of police protection	+1.13	+0.82	0.905
Real estate tax rate	-0.38	-0.33	-0.197
Future use of mountains	-0.70	-1.14	1.095
Future use of forests	-0.76	-1.21	1.129
Future use of parks	-0.12	+0.21	-0.844
Future of hunting and fishing	-0.24	-0.45	0.554
Quality of air	-0.94	-1.18	0.576
Noise	-1.58	-1.49	-0.264
Litter	-1.90	-2.43	1.426
Standard of living of residents	+0.87	+0.55	1.016
Understanding different people	+1.52	+1.46	0.229
Occurrences of drug/alcohol abuse	-0.61	-0.91	1.004
Occurrences of crime	-0.81	-1.29	1.277
Quality of public education	+0.60	+0.81	-0.799
Quality of health care	+0.93	+1.07	-0.557
Unemployment	+0.02	+0.27	-0.834
Availability of cultural arts	+2.19	+2.29	-0.403
Overall quality of life for residents	+1.82	+1.60	0.641

* $p < .05$

Table 5

Mean Ratings of Impacts by Ethnic Minority Status

Impact	Non-Minority	Ethnic Minority	T value
Availability of housing	-0.26	-0.19	-0.139
Cost of land and housing	-0.52	+0.10	-1.204
Traffic and road conditions	-2.80	-2.39	-0.679
Population density	-0.20	+0.39	-1.345
Availability of recreational facilities	+0.55	+0.48	0.124
Opportunity for jobs	+1.22	-1.26	-0.076
Employment fluctuations	-0.06	+0.13	-0.370
Income of residents	+0.66	+0.55	0.229
Changes in community values, norms and customs	+0.11	+0.39	-0.635
Opportunity for shopping	+1.49	+1.03	0.898
General prices for goods and services	-1.10	-1.42	0.610
Quality of fire protection	+1.11	+1.07	0.091
Quality of police protection	+0.98	+0.84	0.240
Real estate tax rate	-0.32	-0.55	0.543
Future use of mountains	-1.01	-0.53	-0.878
Future use of forests	-1.05	-0.77	-0.529
Future use of parks	-0.01	+0.48	-0.925
Future of hunting and fishing	-0.46	+0.19	-1.373
Quality of air	-1.20	-0.36	-1.460
Noise	-1.62	-1.03	-1.258
Litter	-2.36	-1.32	-2.016 *
Standard of living of residents	+0.67	+0.81	-0.300
Understanding different people	+1.47	+1.61	-0.390
Occurrences of drug/alcohol abuse	-0.77	-0.84	0.172
Occurrences of crime	-1.11	-0.94	-0.353
Quality of public education	+0.61	+1.32	-1.777
Quality of health care	+0.93	+1.45	-1.346
Unemployment	+0.21	-0.10	0.709
Availability of cultural arts	+2.331	+1.77	1.642
Overall quality of life for residents	+1.70	+1.71	-0.025

* p<.05

Table 6

Mean Ratings of Impacts by Children in the Household

Impact	No Children	Children in Home	T value
Availability of housing	-0.25	-0.24	-0.049
Cost of land and housing	-0.29	-0.65	0.959
Traffic and road conditions	-2.68	-2.83	0.387
Population density	-0.10	-0.13	0.092
Availability of recreational facilities	+0.31	+0.92	-1.629
Opportunity for jobs	+0.88	+1.79	-2.263 *
Employment fluctuations	-0.23	+0.30	-1.518
Income of residents	+0.81	+0.37	1.159
Changes in community values, norms and customs	-0.03	+0.45	-1.602
Opportunity for shopping	+1.28	+1.67	-1.153
General prices for goods and services	-1.17	-1.11	-0.185
Quality of fire protection	+1.02	+1.25	-0.753
Quality of police protection	+0.87	+1.12	-0.700
Real estate tax rate	-0.29	-0.46	0.602
Future use of mountains	-1.10	-0.66	-1.085
Future use of forests	-1.19	-0.69	-1.220
Future use of parks	0.00	+0.17	-0.423
Future of hunting and fishing	-0.21	-0.61	1.039
Quality of air	-1.05	-1.19	0.168
Noise	-1.23	-2.03	2.282 *
Litter	-2.04	-2.46	1.112
Standard of living of residents	+0.72	+0.65	0.208
Understanding different people	+1.55	+1.38	0.609
Occurrences of drug/alcohol abuse	-0.60	-1.07	1.483
Occurrences of crime	-0.91	-1.37	1.181
Quality of public education	+0.53	+1.03	-1.912
Quality of health care	+0.81	+1.34	-2.095 *
Unemployment	+0.13	+0.22	-0.306
Availability of cultural arts	+2.08	+2.53	-1.779
Overall quality of life for residents	+1.61	+1.86	-0.672

* $p < .05$

Table 7
Mean Ratings of Impacts by Income Levels

Impact	Under \$20,000	\$20,000 -\$39,999	\$40,000 or More	ANOVA F-Ratio
Availability of housing	-0.08	-0.50	-0.20	0.686
Cost of land and housing	-0.11	-0.80	+0.20	2.296
Traffic and road conditions	-2.19	-3.03	-2.97	1.791
Population density	+0.38	-0.15	-0.34	1.503
Availability of recreational facilities	+0.38	+0.37	+1.37	2.092
Opportunity for jobs	+0.44	+0.87	+2.60	6.609
Employment fluctuations	-0.13	-0.37	+0.57	1.775
Income of residents	+0.18	+0.37	+1.86	5.258*
Changes in community values, norms and customs	+0.24	+0.17	-0.20	0.579
Opportunity for shopping	+1.73	+1.22	+1.20	0.968
General prices for goods and services	-1.32	-0.96	-1.20	0.363
Quality of fire protection	+1.08	+0.96	+1.14	0.112
Quality of police protection	+1.03	+1.00	+0.91	0.027
Real estate tax rate	-0.43	-0.37	+0.43	2.513
Future use of mountains	-0.86	-1.22	-0.06	2.098
Future use of forests	-1.00	-1.38	0.00	3.002
Future use of parks	+0.4	-0.43	+0.83	3.231*
Future of hunting and fishing	+0.18	-0.82	-0.03	2.659
Quality of air	-0.68	-1.55	-0.94	1.825
Noise	-0.86	-2.08	-1.34	4.698*
Litter	-1.52	-2.86	-2.26	4.722*
Standard of living of residents	+0.27	+0.91	+1.54	4.136*
Understanding different people	+1.30	+1.90	+1.43	1.830
Occurrence of drug/alcohol abuse	-0.61	-1.16	-0.77	1.153
Occurrences of crime	-0.67	-1.66	-1.37	2.628
Quality of public education	+0.65	+0.62	+0.94	0.402
Quality of health care	+0.70	+0.79	+1.68	3.811*
Unemployment	+0.13	-0.01	+0.69	1.289
Availability of cultural arts	+2.05	+2.37	+3.03	3.983*
Overall quality of life for residents	+1.37	+2.12	+2.09	2.131

* p<.05

Table 8

Mean Ratings of Impact by Hospitality Employment Status

Impact	Employed in Hosp. Industry	Not Emp. in Hosp. Industry	T value
Availability of housing	-0.31	-0.23	-0.220
Cost of land and housing	-0.40	-0.43	0.072
Traffic and road conditions	-2.87	-2.70	-0.369
Population density	+0.02	-0.15	0.452
Availability of recreational facilities	+0.27	+0.61	-0.774
Opportunity for jobs	+1.07	+1.27	-0.411
Employment fluctuations	+0.11	-0.07	0.445
Income of residents	+0.82	+0.60	0.526
Changes in community values, norms and customs	+0.22	+0.13	0.293
Opportunity for shopping	+1.73	+1.34	1.112
General prices for goods and services	-1.29	-1.11	-0.423
Quality of fire protection	+0.80	+1.19	-1.026
Quality of police protection	+0.67	+1.04	-0.898
Real estate tax rate	-0.62	-0.27	-0.932
Future use of mountains	-1.39	-0.82	-1.181
Future use of forests	-1.29	-0.92	-0.739
Future use of parks	-0.02	+0.09	-0.226
Future of hunting and fishing	-0.87	-0.22	-1.416
Quality of air	-1.60	-0.93	-1.366
Noise	-2.09	-1.37	-1.732
Litter	-2.53	-2.10	-0.980
Standard of living of residents	+0.60	+0.72	-0.294
Understanding different people	+1.58	+1.46	0.365
Occurrences of drug/alcohol abuse	-0.59	-0.83	0.680
Occurrences of crime	-1.02	-1.10	0.160
Quality of public education	+0.84	+0.68	0.677
Quality of health care	+0.98	+1.02	-0.154
Unemployment	+0.53	+0.06	1.291
Availability of cultural arts	+2.58	+2.15	1.575
Overall quality of life for residents	+1.31	+1.81	-1.166

* $p < .05$

Table 9

Results of Stepwise Multiple Regression Relationship of Perceptions of Specific Impacts to Overall Quality of Life

Variable	Coefficient	Significance	R
Standard of Living	0.418	0.000	.486
Future Use of Parks	0.899	0.000	.556
Quality of Fire Protection	0.242	0.000	.596
Occurrence of Crime	-0.208	0.000	.630
Changes in Community Values	0.155	0.033	.644
Population Density	0.128	0.043	.653